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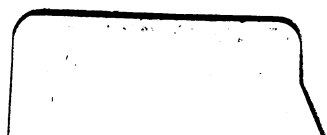
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POEMS
FROM
THE GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

NC

Olive

POEMS

FROM

THE GREEK MYTHOLOGY:

AND

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BY

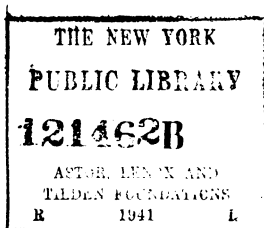
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THE Poems contained in this volume were originally published in the *Athenæum*, *Household Words*, *All the Year Round*, and one or two other journals, from time to time, during a period of several years. They are now republished in a form which challenges more attention than they could hope to receive when separately issued, in order that the author may be enabled to determine, by the judgment of competent critics, whether they have any worth or none, and whether

or not he may in the future diversify the labours of a working literary life by compositions such as those he now once more submits to public notice.

E. O.

SOUTH KENSINGTON,
July, 1867.

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POEMS
FROM
THE GREEK MYTHOLOGY.



Well, therefore, did the antique world invent,

* * * * *

With faynèd colours shading a true case.

SPENSER'S *Faery Queene*.

The stretchèd metre of an antique song.

SHAKSPEARE. *Sonnet XVII.*

BACCHUS IN THE EAST.

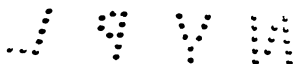
Bacchus, with furious might,
 All the East, before untamed, did over-ronne,
 And wrong repressèd, and establisht right,
 Which lawlesse men had formerly fordonne :
 There Justice first her princely rule begonne.

SPENSER.

HALT, and be still, ye hot-cheek'd bacchanals
 And ye, who rage about me like a storm,
 Rough satyrs, barky as the woods ye haunt,—
 And thou, unfathomable Intelligence
 Of this discordant world, earth-ruling Pan,
 Chaotic, wild, and multiform, and gross,
 Yet fit for noblest purposes and ends,—
 Fling your large limbs upon the grass, beneath

The dark, untremulous shadow of these palms,
And dream of the Arcadian forests old !

Silenus,—thou who hast from day to day
Gather'd smooth wisdom from the rugged husk
Of toil, and search, and questioning of things,
And painful meditations in the night,—
I pray thee, my most reverend teacher, stay
Still by my side, and temper with cool drops
From founts of ancient virtue my hot zeal
When it would burn its master ; for I err
Not seldom when the grape's blood boils in my own,
And trample in the fierceness of my will
The flowers that I would rear. And yet I think
I am not all a mortal ; for, at times—
Hush'd times, when the soul hearkens to itself—
I feel such throbbings of immortal strength
As madden me to action ; and one night,
Sleeping within a cave beside the sea,
I saw rush over those untravell'd waves



An orbèd radiance, wherein dwelt a voice
That hail'd me "Son!"—at which I leapt awake,
And shouted to the heavens gigantic words
Whose sense I knew not; for it seem'd as though
A God was in my heart, who tore my lips
To utterance of whatever sounds he pleased.

Strange promptings of strange things! It was not
so

When in my youth I dwelt in Naxos. There
The things of earth contented me. I lay
In breezy bowers, hung with large grapes, and
crush'd

Into my mouth their willing wine: I danced
With the light-footed nymphs upon the sands,
Or in green inland places, till we seem'd
Like spirits floating upon odorous gales
Back to the Golden Age: I clad with vines
The bare and tawny ridges of the hills,
And train'd their tendrils down the southern slopes

From elm to elm, hanging in middle air
Their amethystine fruitage—clustering globes ;
And when the day was done, I sang blithe hymns,
Crowning myself a victor o'er his toils
With roses crimson-soul'd and ivy dark ;—
And I was happy. But at length a change
Crept over me. The joys that once had been
Ample and deep, seem'd tame ; and in their place
Grew up a mighty vagueness, which, like shade
From passing clouds o'er sunlit lands, made blank
Field after field of brilliance. Sadness fell
Upon my soul, and it was desolate,—dark ;
And rising sense of power, that might have stood
On Jove's cerulean battlements alone,
And flung the Titans down the pilèd hills,
Burnt like a flame within the spirit of life,
Consuming it, as that Arabian bird
Consumes itself in rich and odorous fires,
With fanning of its own empurpled wings
Augmented, till from wormy death forth comes

The renovated splendour. So with me.
At night, when nothing but the silence seem'd
Between me and the summit of all things,
The waves of some yet never-worded thought
Would beat upon the bare sands of my brain,
Moaning awhile, then ebbing back to space,
I impotent to follow. When, by day,
I listlessly went forth into the fields,
All forms of Nature, from the grass to the sun,
Perplex'd me with a dumb, pathetic prayer
To satisfy some everlasting want
At their heart's core ; which, in my ignorance
Even of its nature, I could answer but
With passionate tears and outcries. Oftentimes
I wander'd into solitudes, and sought
Interpretation of the truth in woods,
When night had knotted all the branchy trees
Into one blackness ; or lay down and slept
In vacant lair of tigers, where my dreams
Presented deserts, dark, and wild, and rough,

Crying for light, and corn, and wine, and oil ;
While pageants of the world's misgovernment
Pass'd and repass'd : kings sceptred with mere
 strength,
Hating and hated ; priests defiled with blood,
Shouting fierce hymns to themselves deified ;
Nations at deadly strife ; men snatching bread
Out of the mouths of their own fellow-men ;
Excess and hunger moving side by side ;
Justice borne down, or daily bought and sold ;
Brute force with altars throng'd with worshippers ;
And Love without a temple or a home,
Wandering about, and weeping as he goes.

At length, I cried aloud : " Rejoice, O Earth !
Rejoice, ye nations ! for the Gods have sent
Me as a day-star to the eclipsing noon
That follows in its season ! Man, rejoice !"
And, at these sounds, the satyrs from the woods,
Led by their mighty Shepherd, swarming came,

And danced about like a fire let loose,
And sang wild songs, full of a secret sense,
And flung their cymball'd hands into the air,
And gash'd each other in their passionate joy :
Then fetch'd a car, that I might ride in state,
Yoked with two tigers, amber, barr'd with black,
Like streaks of night athwart a yellow dawn :
And forth I rode ; and, as I went, out flock'd
Men in great numbers, arm'd with javelins light
Bound with an ivy-trail,—and women too,
Who, drinking of the wine I gave to them,
Became inspired, and prophesied, and seized
Each one a torch, and dash'd its flame on the wind,
Moving like planets round my awful throne.
Even the Muses follow'd me, and sang,
Tuning my wildness to a sweet accord ;
And, lastly, thou didst join me, best of all,
My foster-sire, Silenus, wise with years.

And now, the sultry deserts being past,

We stand upon the verge of India,
And view the mighty Future stretching out
As vast and dim as seas when evening falls.
Our way grows perilous ; for all the land
Is girt with monstrous dragons interknit,
The hiss of whose innumerable tongues
Angers the lion in his forest den,
And the reed-haunting elephant confounds,
And flows for ever o'er the Indian fields
Like an unresting wind. Within this zone—
Which folds them round as with enchantment
strong—

Dwells a swart people, cruel, treacherous,
Cowering in caves, and chasing with swift feet
Less savage beasts for food ; unblest with wine,
And knowing not the godlike art which crowns
The earth with foison. There, by doom perverse,
The fiercest and most ignorant solely rule,
Piling the thrones of their fantastic pride
Even on their kindred's necks. Therefore must we

First fight, then teach ; for, in this wrong-gone world,
Force must be met by force, till, in the end,
Justice, the fairest child of grey-hair'd Time,
Shall hold the round heavens evenly for aye.

The earth is sick at heart—sick with the false
And insolent pretence of meanest things,
And with her children's miseries and crimes,
Strange cruelty, and heavy ignorance.
She sighs for the old days of simple truth
When Saturn dwelt among the sons of men ;
And turns, like feverish sleepers, every way
For rest, which will not come. The snaky weeds,
Which the rank flood of ages has begot
On its own slime, encumber her : she faints,
And cries in fainting for some mighty hand,
Arm'd with fierce love as with a fiery sword,
To save her from that vast, entangling woe ;
Some glorious Destroyer, crown'd with Life,
Strong to cast down the rocky towers of Ill,

And to uprear the endless home of Truth.
Such one am I ; who, by the will of Jove,
And by consent of the harmonious spheres,
Now move in solemn triumph o'er the globe,
A burning energy—a light—a star !
—Lo, how all things flush out at my approach !
Lo, how the grass starts to Elysian green
Beneath the pressing of my satyr's limbs,
As if the Spring had kiss'd it ! And, behold !
There, where my tigers' nostrils touch'd the earth,
A fountain of dark wine has bubbled up,
Killing, with odours from rich depths, the air,
That joys to be so slain. The trees are full
Of glancing lights, golden and sapphirine,
Which stir and thrill like chords upon a harp,
Touch'd by celestial fingers ; and the large,
Deep-bosom'd, heavy Oriental flowers
Are kindled with a radiance new and strange.
Nature, the sacred mother of us all,
Leaps from her sullen mood of many a year

Into prophetic gladness, and flings out
This giant utterance : " I am freed ! The chains
Of falsehood, and malignity, and guile,
And sceptred violence, and victorious wrong,
Are snapt by the great Bacchus ! Evoe !
Justice is throned ! Love is the Lord of all ! "

Up, then, ye satyrs, and ye higher shapes,
Women and men, rough workers of my will !
Rise like a tempest ; and with dreadful clang
Of smitten cymbals, and the gulf-like roar
Of many voices sounding but as one,
Strike mute the hissings of those clotted snakes
Which soon will bar our way. Before your path
Shake silvery lightning from your javelins,
That the wild people may exclaim—" A God
Comes in his brightness and his thunder-noise ! "
And ever let the Muses speak of things
That stand before Time's presence unabash'd ;
And let old Pan talk to his tunèd reeds,

Laden with love and human memories.

—Onward ! I swoon with thoughts that find no voice !

I am rapt as in a cloud of wingèd fire !

I move upon a wind of ecstasies !

My own words pierce my blood, and pass to my
heart,

✓ Like strange, sharp arrows of tormenting joy !

The humming of far depths is in my ears !

I see the flowing of an endless stream

Which spreads round the dark pyramids and towers,

Temples and palaces, of ancient lands,

Making divine their greyness ; and o'er all

I hear the sound of an up-coming sun

Rising through unborn ages,—and behold

The morning's golden prophet, Phosphorus,

Float in the sapphire Orient of the world !

PROSERPINA IN THE SHADES.

THROUGH the dull hours (that see not any
change

Of light and dark, of sun and moon and stars)

I dwell in this domain of woeful shapes,

Thinking of Enna and the distant day.

My heart is ever homelessly wandering

In the upper fields. Mine eyes are blind with tears.

The endless twilight, and perpetual growth

Of leaves in this hot subterranean world,

Confuse my sense of time ; so that, alas !

I know not how the years increase and wane.

I know not when the Spring's invisible kiss

Fills dusky nooks with flaming crocus-buds,

And startles the brown woodlands into green :

I know not when the Summer covers up
With leaves, and blooms, and flowers of colour'd
light

Young Flora, and, as from a censer, flings
Large incense to the odour-loving Gods :
I know not when the Autumn walks abroad,
Golden beneath the blue and breathless sky,
And to my mother Ceres offers fruits,
Honey, and wine, and wealth of bearded corn :
Nor know I when the Winter, noiselessly,
Comes down like sleep on the exhausted earth.

Ever, for ever, stares my life at me,
Like a stone face upon a monument,
That looks with passionless eyes into the air,
Age after age. O young and delicate blooms
Quickening within the ground above my head !
The sweet light woos from far, and you ascend
Out of your dark, pre-natal prison-house.
O growths of fields and woods ! you pass bright
lives

Beneath the round and sun-eyed firmament ;
And when death comes, your tender souls exhale
Calmly as sleep from off an infant's brow
When morning wakes it. But, for Me, no sun
Will ever rise—no death will ever fall.

Instead of you, O plains of Sicily,
And dark green valley-depths, and mountains zoned
With pine woods, singing in the infinite wind !
Instead of you, I must for aye reside
In this sad garden, under shades of death,
Half-kindled by those far Etnean fires
Where singèd Vulcan and his fellows beat
The sullen iron into shape, and dash,
All round, a wrathful and tumultuous dawn.—

✓ Silence, and rest, and dreams, are on this place :
The black trees gloom ; the clotted foliage creeps
From trunk to trunk across the moveless air ;
The slumber-bearing weeds, large-leaved and lax,
Drag with the fulness of their unctuous juice,

Unpluck'd ; and flowers of poisonous sweetness
drowse,

Heavy and golden-ripe, on branch and spray.

But what avails it unto me? Vain ! vain !

Hemlock, and hellebore, and poppy ; all

You syrup-balms of agony ; and you,

Swart berries, in whose pulp is found by men

The sleep that has no waking ; you are void

Of power to lull my dragon grief, for I

Am all undying as a naked soul.

I am a Queen, and yet I cannot die.

I languish on a fierce and golden seat,

And waste towards the stars, and yet remain.

My spirit is an upward-straining fire,

Divorced for ever from its home, the sun ;

For ever idly striving to climb back.

I am a wife, yet wherefore am I so ?

My eyes are widow'd of the lightsome sky,
My ears are orphan'd of familiar sounds.

O mother Ceres! Like a desert sea,
Whose dull grey lips upon the skyey wall
Are press'd continually, my life rolls out
Towards the aye-receding shore. But still
I will hope on. Patience is strong as Fate,
And weighs with firm and equal poise against
The heaviest destiny. It is a moon
That wanes not, neither sets, but keeps full-orb'd ;
An earnest of all immaturèd good ;
A white Aurora to the coming day,
Streaking dark heaven with brightness ; the heart's
rest ;
A central peace in tempest and in war ;
A soul of sweetness in a mass of gall.
All things have need of patience. The old earth,
Made rough and ragged by the wintry cold,
Is patient, and looks forward to the time

When Spring's hot blood shall mount within her veins,
And flush her face with beauty. In like sort,
The centuries are patient, and hold firm
Through the long mystery of pain and guilt,
With faces ever looking t'wards the end
Within the far To-come. What else, sad heart,
Has the expecting mother whose dear lord
Is dead and earth'd—what else but patient hope
To see the birth of that glad infant life
Which shall re-link her to the lost beloved?—
Therefore will I be patient, and will hope,
Even though the centuries should mock my hope;
For Jove is strong, and circles round the world.

Behold! even now more happy thoughts have
come!

I see a land of loveliness and joy
Lying beyond the stream of present time;
And, though I lack a bridge to pass thereto,
I will sit humbly on the bank, and wait,

Till Heaven shall send some radiant messenger
To lead me forth over the perilous bourne.—
But what if he should never come? Oh, then
Patience will make a glory of its own,
Wherefrom the gloom and sadness of this place
Will lighten, like old Chaos in the beams
Of newly-risen Jove. So, at the last,
All darkness, and all mortal clouds of pain,
Shall burn into a bright ethereal gold ;
For the great Gods are working secretly,
And will not rest until, within the abyss,
The crystal orb of being, sphere in sphere,
Hangs round, and smooth, and perfect, and all-sunn'd
In the universal morning. I repose
My head upon the pillow of that thought.
So will I comfort me, and stand erect
Under my grief ; since in the harshest sounds
I hear the music of celestial Law.

PROTEUS.

The Poets say that Proteus was Neptune's herdsman : a grave sire, and so excellent a prophet that he might well be termed *thrice* excellent ; for he knew not only things to come, but even things past as well as present ; so that, besides his skill in divination, he was the messenger and interpreter of all Antiquities and hidden mysteries.

BACON'S *Wisdom of the Ancients*.

O MANY-VISAGED, many-voicèd Sea !

'Tis well that unto creatures made for death—

Blind spirits flickering in a clod of dust—

Thou shouldst suggest vague meanings, which still
fade

Before the slow conception of the brain,

Baffling the grasp,—and yet are ever there.

But I, who drew from thee my life ; who know

All things that in thy vast domain abide,
From farthest North unto extremest South,
With all the depths that lie 'twixt East and West
Unvisited of Dian ; I, who am
By right the hoary shepherd of thy flocks,
And lord of all thy monsters ; find in thee,
O thou Eternal ! wisdom vast and high,
And echoes from the gulf of antique years.

Yet not alone have I the Past in view.
The phantoms of the Future—prototypes
Of countless thoughts and actions crowding on
Like shadows through the gusty plains of space—
To me are gross and palpable, and bound
To answer when I question. For my sire,
Earth-clasping Neptune, gave me power to look
Into that starry palace, far above,
Where Fate sits circled with the wrecks of Time ;
And to my musing spirit whispers float
Of planetary secrets—mysteries

Whereof man dreams not—unembodied thoughts
Yet forming in Jove's brain, which, if proclaim'd,
Would shake the heavens with vast imaginings.

Therefore I search out solitary shores
Beside lone oceans, where no sound can come
But harmonies of winds and swooning waves,
Or clamour of imprison'd waters, deep
In rocky chasms. And when Night steals up,
Like an enchantress calling forth new worlds,
I sit upon some stony mass, apart,
(Myself as still and pulseless as a stone,)
And hearken to the voices, grave and full,
Of the far-lying Future, as they come
Muttering like thunder when its sleep is dash'd
With clang of wild and windy trumpets, blown
Beneath the vaulted masonry of the clouds.
Then do I muse on Time and Destiny,
And on the meaning of this tangled world,
And on the hidden motives of the Gods,

Close kept by jealous Nature ; and so grasp
At once, with bidding of my potent will,
The end for which the toiling ages work.—
Knowledge, of mightiest import, I have wooed
From Heaven, to dwell in me as in its sphere ;
And I am grey with living in all times :
For unto me a minute of man's life
Holds in its circle all that Fate can will,
Or trancèd Jove can dream.

Be comforted,
Ye prophets of the Future ! Time goes on
Like some pale wanderer in a desert land,
Uncertain of the end he travels to ;
But ye can ante-date his farthest step,
And touch his utmost bourne. Despair lives not
For such as ye, O utterers of the Unknown !
Who see the blissful end of all things, wrapp'd
In leaf-like foldings of the centuries,
As some sweet bud of Summer lies and dreams

In its green cloister, till the lips of June
Awake it into life. Go boldly forth !
Sing loud your spheral music, ye who are
Earth's truest giants, warring not with Jove,
But aiding his high work, which ripens still,
Even when the rough winds shake it to the core.
Live for the End ; the End aye lives for ye :
And when the whelming sleep is on your eyes,
I will bring shades and visions from the deep
Beyond Olympus, where the Gods reside,—
The eternal deep (fit home of glorious shapes),
Sapphirine, radiant, zoned with happy stars,
And loud with songs of endless utterance ;
And so inclose a thousand years of bliss
In narrow compass, until Morning flings
Its golden bridge across the eastern waves.

ELEUSINIA :

LINES SUGGESTED BY THE BAS-RELIEFS ON THE PORTLAND
VASE ; THE FIGURES OF WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO BE
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.

B L U E darkness, such as fills the summer night,
Rolls round this Vase before me ; and I see
The stately visions of an elder time
Fix'd by the art of Greece for evermore.

What naked man is this, that, fearfully,
Beneath a pillar'd portico moves on
Into the glimmering dusk ? He, sick at heart
With all the shows and wranglings of this life,
Would pass the magic Temple doors, and know
The faces of the glad Eternal Gods ;

Would stand upon the brink, and gaze far down
The dazzling pits of Being, and the abyss
Where suns, and moons, and stars, without an end,
Boil upward like a storm of sparkling dust,
Blown by the lips of Jove. And he would hear
The swift and glassy spheres, Heaven over Heaven,
Their nine-fold crystal thunders modulate
To perfect music and Divine consent,
In-orbing all things with round harmony.
Yet, pausing as in doubt and natural fear
Of what those boundaries may perchance enclose,
He stands upon the threshold of two worlds,
And hears the voices calling either way.

O floating Love ! white star within the dark !
Clear herald of the morning ! lead him on
Through the long silence and the mystical night
To where the Gods reveal themselves in flame,
And the great secret of the world lies bare !
O beckoning Love ! keep ever on thy path

With forward wings and backward looks, that he
May pass unfaltering the severe aspects
That gloom about the palace-doors of Jove ;
And, entering, may behold, and yet still live,
The fountain of that elemental Life
Which is the essence of all forms and modes,
From the intensest star beyond the sun
To the dejected worm : that active soul
Which from inert, cold matter summons forth
The green enchantments of the Spring, and all
The richness of the harvest. Lead him on
Past the old satyr visages, whose eyes,
For ever upward cast, seem ever waiting
Some revelation of the hidden sense
Of Heaven's marmoreal hieroglyph. And thou,
Fair shape of woman, whom the serpent loves
To play with (like grey Knowledge twining round
The eternal youth of Beauty), hold him thus,—
Thus, with thy hand upon his arm,—until
His doubt and fear have flown, and he perceives

The inner throbbings of Elysian dawn
Pulse in the darkness, and the sacred day
Silently open like a golden rose.

I turn the Vase, and see two watching shapes,
Female and male, who steadfastly regard,
✓ With looks that breed a sense of quietness,
A languid woman sitting on a heap
Of rugged stones, beneath a large-leaved tree,
Close by a column ;—with one hand upthrown
Across the head ; the other droopingly
Holding a drooping torch, whose flame, nigh spent,
Falters and flaps upon the verge of dusk.
A waking sleep, with pageantries of dreams,
Holds her in trance ; and all the tide of life
Is at an ebb. O melancholy eyes !
✓ O empty eyes, from which the soul has gone
To see the far-off countries ! still look thus
Over the wastes of Time, that we may read
Thy owner's history written large and fair.

She, by long fasting and much solitude,
And by strong aspiration, has attain'd
To inward vision of the outward world ;
Till, down the endless vistas of new sense,
Her spirit, like a taper-dazzled moth,
Embalms itself in brightness, and is blown
In gusts of splendour round that central sphere
Which flings the suns and planets into space,
Yet curbs the wheeling systems. She has seen
The awful sanctities of Birth, and Death,
And Resurrection, and the hearts of things ;
Rich darkness, and the light of Paradise.
And still she drifts around the happy shores
Of those star-islands where the Immortals sing,
Each unto each, over the echoing deeps ;
And still she burns about the golden gloom
Wherein is shrined, as in a luminous orb,
The heaven of Supreme Jove ; till, half-consumed,
And faint with congregated ecstasies,
For ever deepening, she sinks whirling down

From the utmost, fierce, insufferable heaven,
Through eddies of keen radiance, swoon on swoon,
Abyss beneath abyss—crying through space :

“O Light, and Love, and Majesty, and Power,
Whereto my soul has journey'd from afar !

The strength of thy perfections drinks me up,

✓ As drops of feeble rain, or feebler dew,

Are caught into the sunbeams ! I am drawn

Into the wind of thy swift orbit—swung

Round the vast circle of created forms :

A conscious atom in the conscious whole ;

A portion of the never-resting scheme.”

P A N.

The Ancients have exquisitely described Nature under the person of Pan.

BACON'S *Wisdom of the Ancients*.

I AM the All—the sole created One—

The solitary Life beside the Life

Which fashion'd me from ancient darkness, flaw'd

With uproar of pre-natal elements :

And thus I dwell through all the quiet years,

A loneliness within a loneliness,

Myself sufficient to myself, and lull'd

By that unbroken silence in my heart,

Answering the silence over all ; whereto

The babbling of my multitudinous tongues

Is as the voice of leaves in stillest night.

All aspects, sounds, and movements, dwell in me.
The knotty forests, and the mountains old,
And the rich valleys, and the cataracts
Dancing like youth eternal, and the wealth
Of the unmaster'd and rebellious sea,
And flowers, and herbs, and roots, and leaves, and
seeds,
With whatsoever in the gorgeous gloom
Of mines and central chasms may be hid ;
Man, and the high-tower'd cities which he builds ;
All lower forms of animal life—beasts, birds,
The swift, cold shapes of oceans, streams, and pools,
Dull reptiles and obscure vitalities,
Monstrous developments and prodigious births,
Motes of intense existence, beyond sight,
And the pale race of ante-natal germs,
Faint atoms on sensation's utter verge ;—
All these are parts of me : yea, more than these.
All central suns,—even to that which is
The centre of all centres, bright and vast,—

Lighten, and burn, and orb their golden fires,
In me for ever : all attendant moons,
Kindling their white souls in the dreadful dark,
Are quicken'd by the life that is in me :
Mine are the lapsing planets, beamy-faced,
The lucid children of the suns, for aye
Peopling my wastes of silence and old Night :
Mine are those swift and haggard wanderers
Of the abyss, comets, drawn on through space
By strong allurements of the unknown sun ;
And mine are all those drifting nebulae
Of shapeless slime and mist, wherefrom new stars,
The happy homes of life and love, shall rise,
And warm the unilluminated gulfs
With spheres of rapid splendour. Meteor-shapes
Of the red storm, and arcs of colour'd light
Built by the sun and rain across the voids,
And vaporous stars, perishing utterly,
And the swift lightning's momentary noon,
Sky-flames, and visions in the homeless clouds—

(The brief and rich enchantments of the heaven,
Dying in their height of glory)—ghostly fogs,
And singing rains out of immensity,
And noiseless snow-falls, and the iron showers
Of hail and sleet, working their gusty will,
And billowy thunders, rolling into space,
And dews, and winds, and the diaphanous air ;—
These, too, are in my universal round.

My lower frame is rough, and wild, and grim ;
Brute matter, torn with savage energies ;
The old rebellion of swart Chaos, still
Struggling with Love, the always-youthful god,
The Reconciler. But, far up, I bask
For ever in the long celestial calm.
Behold ! the stars are quivering on my breast !
Behold ! my face is golden-bright with flame !
And upward from my head two horny beams
Stretch lengthening into heaven, with thrill on thrill
Of endless aspiration, tireless hope.

Graves, and the dust of graves, are at my feet ;
Death, and the knowledge of death, are round my
ways,

And in the hearts of these my creatures, born
Blind, and so blindly groping to the end.
My earth is vex'd with change, and grieved with
loss ;

And at the root of all my manifold life
I feel the stirring of the worm—the flux
And ebb of dim mortality. Beneath,
The ashes of my burnt-out fires lie grey ;
But in the upper air and heights supreme
Of inaccessible Being, wherein Death
Dies, and becomes a mockery or a shade,
Lo, Pan, the bi-form'd monster,—the beast-god
Adored of silly shepherds and wild things,—
Grows one with heaven, and heaven's immortal
youth.

So is it with the substance of the world.

Below, all forms are diverse, opposite,
Confounded with their contraries, cross-cut
With wranglings and with jealousies, grotesque,
Irreconcilable, and reeling back
To their original atoms : higher up,
Come fitness and consent of part with part,
Making one harmony ; while, at the peak
Of the ever-narrowing pyramid of things,
The mystery of the unincarnate Jove
Lies like a consummation ; into which
All figures sharpen upward, and are lost,—
All shapes, all hues, all odours, and all sounds,
Pass, as the flushings of the rainy bow
Fade in the vast and all-insphering air.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



THE ANGEL.


A WINTER STORY.

IT was well nigh a thousand years ago,
And in the season when the sharp winds blow,
That Alfred, our great Saxon hero, lay
Conceal'd within the Isle of Athelney.

The island was a lonely spot of ground,
By rotting waters and dark bogs shut round ;
A grudging piece of earth, which only bore
Fang'd briars, and moss, and grasses lank and poor.
Look where you would, no sight could you descry
But the black marsh, and the wastes of sky,
And the dull river, always loitering by.

Alfred (constrain'd by adverse fate to hide
From the Dane's legions, thick on every side),
In this bare isle, and in as bare a hut,
With a few comrades and his Queen was shut.
The iron Winter stabb'd them like a sword :
Coarse were their robes, and meagre was their board—
Bread, and the flesh of fowls, bitter and harsh,
Caught with sore travail in the reedy marsh.

The King in this poor dwelling sat one night
Intently reading by a feeble light.
His friends had all gone forth, seeking for prey
Amid the plashes and the moorlands grey ;
And there was quiet all about the isle.—
In sacred peace sat Alfred for awhile,
Until a knocking at the door at last
Disturb'd the silence. The King rose, and pass'd
Straight to the threshold, and beheld an old
And ragged Pilgrim standing in the cold,
Who said, " Lo, here upon this ground I die



For very hunger, unless presently
Thou giv'st me food ! It is a grievous way
That I have footed since the dawn of day ;
And now I stagger, like a man in drink,
For weariness, and I must shortly sink.
The stinging marsh-dews clasp me round like Death,
And my brain darkens, and I lose my breath."

"Now, God be thank'd," cried Alfred, "that He
sends

To one poor man a poorer ! Want makes friends
Of its own fellows, when the alien rich
Fear its accusing rags, and in some ditch
Huddle it blindly. I have little bread,—
One loaf for many mouths ; but He o'erhead,
Who made me, can sustain me, if He will."

He bow'd himself, and for a space was still.
Then, with good cheer, he brought the loaf which lay
Alone between them and a slow decay ;

All that might save them, in that desert place,
From the white famine that makes blank the face ;—
And, breaking it, gave half to the old man.

Lo, ere the sharpest eye could difference scan
'Twixt light and dark, the Pilgrim standing there
Evanish'd, and made ghostly all the air
From earth to heaven. But the loaf was whole ;
And Alfred, with a trembling in his soul,
Rush'd out, and stared across the level fen.
No human shape was there, nor trace of men ;
But, smooth, and void, and dark, burdening the eye,
The great blank marsh answer'd the great blank sky.
The secret bittern clang'd among the reeds,
And shook, like wind, the ever-drowsy weeds
Of the morass. All other sounds were dead ;
And a dull stupor fell on Alfred's head.

He stumbled to the house, and sleep was strong
And dark upon his eyelids ; but, ere long,

An Angel, with a face placid and bright,
Fill'd all the caverns of his brain with light.
“ I am the Pilgrim,” said this shape. “ I came
From out my depths of elemental flame,
Through the still night, to try thee ; and I find
That thou art firmly just and largely kind.
Wherefore, I'll make thee great above thy foes,
And like a planet that still speeds and glows,
Circling about the centuries for ever.
Yet thou must aid me with all good endeavour ;
And when thou hast regain'd thy crown and
state,
Make them no objects of a nation's hate.
Let men behold, as in a sheltering tower,
The tranquil aspects of benignant Power,—
Love arm'd with Strength ; and lop thou, with firm
hand,
That many-headed Hunger in thy land
Which casts its shadow on the golden walls
Of the too-rich, who, in their festivals,

Still fear the rising of that dreadful thing
Right in the midst, there where they dance and sing,
And feel its lurking presence in the night :
See thou to this, and hold the scales aright.
Stand fast by truth, although thou stand alone,
And love thy people better than thy throne.
So shall all things go smoothly on their way
Under the even music of thy sway."

The vision faded like a subtle bloom
As the still dawn was whitening all the room ;
And Alfred, starting up, with staring eyes,
Saw his friends round him laden with supplies ;—
Who told him that the Danes had fallen back
Before the terror of a fresh attack,
And that the people, gathering up their heart,
Call'd loudly for their King to act his part,
And take his sceptre and his throne again,—
Now doubly his, through wisdom born of pain.

A SONG OF SPRING.

I DREAM with half-shut eyes, and see
New greenness flush the dark brown lea :—
Spring is coming !

I hear a sound of gradual rain,
Soothing Earth's long Winter pain :—
Spring is coming !

Out of the deep woods a sense
Of a new-born influence
Floats towards me ; and my heart
Is haunted with a thought of flowers
That from secret chambers start
At the touch of silvery showers.
Laugh, oh Earth ! and, Man, be glad !
Everything with joy is clad :—
Spring is coming !

THE BROTHERS.

A TALE OF "ARABY THE BLEST."

IN Araby the Blest two brothers lived :
Ali and Zeid. Ali, the elder one,
Was married, and had children young and fair,
The red-lipp'd fruitage of our human tree ;
But Zeid dwelt singly, though his love was great.

They had one field in common, which they sow'd
With life-sustaining corn, marking no bounds
Of mine and thine,—words sad, unblest, and hard ;
But what our mother earth gave equally
For equal toil, to them brought equal good.

Harvest came round with Autumn. The one field

Of the two brothers glow'd like tawny fire,
Self-ripening as with inward heat and life ;
And all the land, with depth of swarthy gold,
Fermented in the vibrating noon-glare.
Ali and Zeid work'd in the field all day,
And Ali's wife and children also work'd ;
Till over heaven fell purple shades of night,
And through star-kingdoms went the Empress moon.

So, day by day they toil'd, till all the sheaves
Were stack'd, and the last gleanings gather'd in :
Then did each brother take his equal share,
And rest was on the land, and vacancy.

And on a night, as Zeid lay in his bed,
Steeping in dew of silence his calm soul,
Into his mind, out of the quiet, grew
These thoughts and words :—" My brother has a wife
And children, who depend upon his arm
For food and raiment ; while my own bare wants

Are all I have to heed. Is it then just
That I should take an equal share with him
Of the rich strength and fatness of the land ? ”
Whereat, being strangely moved within his soul,
He rose, and quickly clad himself, and went
Forth from the house. One darkness fill'd the air ;
But from that great Oblivion in the heavens
✓ Look'd out the crowding eyes of endless space.
A still wind slowly breathed along the fields,
Like whispers from the awful heart of earth ;
And the trees stirr'd, and talk'd among themselves.

So, in close darkness, went the good Zeid forth,
Even as a thief ; and took from his own heap
A dozen sheaves of corn, and laid them with
Ali's ; and softly to his bed return'd.

And at that moment Ali woke, and shook
The clinging drowsiness from his wife, and said :—
“ A good, glad thought has come to me in sleep.

My brother is a lonely man, unblest
With wife or children, who might yield to him
Aid in day-labour, company at eve ;
While God has crown'd me with a living joy,
And natural help, and solace against age.
Therefore, it is not right that we should bear
As many sheaves as he from off the field,
Since we have more of the fair fruits of life :
And so I have bethought me, in a dream,
To take a certain number of our sheaves,
And add to his. Now say, shall it be so ? ”

She hearken'd, and was glad it should be so :
And Ali rose, and went from out the house
Through the still night ; and took from his own heap
A dozen sheaves, and laid them secretly
With Zeid's ; and softly to his bed return'd.

Next morning, both the brothers went afield ;
When lo ! the sheaves were equal as before.

Night after night they did the same good deed,
Yet still the sheaves were equal as before ;
Till, greatly marvelling at the mystery,
Upon the same night each resolved to watch.

Darkness and sleep again were on all things,
As Zeid and Ali reach'd the open field.
Quickly they did according to their wont ;
When, in the middle of the way between,
Each saw a dusky figure in the gloom,
Moving uneasily beneath a weight.
They paused, each fearing that the thing he saw
(In the confused air looking vague and vast)
Might be some angel, dangerous to be met,
Whose eyes would kill with access of new sense.
Forward they moved again : then, with a cry
(As one who finds a subtle truth in a dream,
After long search and travail all the day),
Their hearts flew out, as they stood face to face,
Each with his loving burden on his back.

O green and vital Mystery of Love,
Still budding in the garden of the heart !
Thou ever-working miracle of God,
Not sent to clash with universal Law,
But, with thy life, the world's bare mechanism
To kindle into beauty absolute,
And light, and flame-like glory, and quick thought,
And warmth, and odour, and a music-voice,
Which else were wanting ! Spirit young and fresh !
In these Arabian brothers thou didst find
Thy perfect type and full development.

What need to tarry longer on the scene?—
Even as their love was heaven-like, so their joy
Took wings that were not earthly, as they stood
Beneath the sacred darkness and the stars.

AN AUTUMN SONG.

THE brown fogs are rising,
The yellow leaves falling ;
The sweet birds are silent,
The harsh winds are calling ;
Summer's fair children
Wither and dwindle ;
Naught but the sunsets
Shine now, and kindle ;
Day has shrunk shorter,
Night has grown longer ;
Warmth becomes weaker,
Cold waxes stronger :
Yet, in close darkness
Which no eye can sever,

The World-strength is shaping
Blossoms for ever.

My age is declining,
My hair it is greying ;
Death, waiting for me,
Brooks no delaying ;
Life is fast sinking,
Sun-like and bright ;
Out of the heavens
Falls the great night.
Yet fear I never
Leaving this earth-place,
Knowing the grave is
Also a birth-place ;
And, the soul growing
With God-strength all vernal,
Will it not burst into
Blossoms eternal ?

THE WIFE-SLAYER.

N O, no ! I did not kill her ! No !
 I say I will not have it so—

I will not hear it ! 'Twas a dream
 From which I woke with sudden scream,
 And found the sweat upon my brow,
 And that dull weight which even now
 Is heavy on my heart and brain.
 Ah, Heaven ! I must have slept again,
 And stumble yet through dusky chasms,
 Flesh-quakings, and tremendous spasms !

I have a wife—a dear one.—Nay,
 Start not ! I have one *still*, I say,—
 Or shall, when from this dream I wake.
 We were heart-wedded : we did slake

Our miseries in each other's tears,
And grew, through all the strange, sad years,
Quiet, in grief's own quietness :
We could walk straight beneath distress,
And make no cry. But want extreme
Seized us ; and then—there came this dream.

Beware ! You'd tell me she is dead !
But I will dash my desperate head
Against these walls, before you speak
That cruel word ! Oh, foul ! You seek
To crush me, seeing I am weak.
You have no touch of human ruth :
You shake me with mere shows of truth,
Which *must* be false, or Heaven would pass
In shudderings to one formless mass.
Why, look in one another's eyes—
How calm they are ! You tell me lies,
Or your own tears would fleck the ground !—
I dreamt it, if this brain is sound.

I thought I had been out all day,
Wandering, in some half-witted way,
In search of work ; and, failing quite,
I came home by the fall of night,
And sat down in my wretched room.
The place was hush'd in heavy gloom,
And voidness lay upon my eyes,
Until I heard some creature rise
Within the darkness,—and a face
Fell on me like a strange disgrace :
The face of her whom most I love,
Dead to all thoughts of all above,—
Burnt up with drink,—a pallid drouth
Around a vague and twitching mouth
That welter'd into speech obscure !—
Oh, how could Love itself endure
That loveless sight ? Fierce words upgrew
Between us, raining poisonous dew.
The hot blood sang within my head,
And humm'd through all my veins, and fled

Out of my heart ; till, half in fear,
Half rage, I seized a bludgeon near,
And dash'd the face that look'd on mine !—
The blood leapt out like awful wine.
My own blood answer'd it. I sought
To beat and crush that face to nought ;
And so the human features fell
To crimson blanks, a soul-less shell :—
I felt like one new-born in Hell.

And, with a scream (from me, not her),
I stagger'd back, and felt a stir
Of gathering crowds, and on my sight
A weight of huge and shoreless night.

My eyes are fire ; but they could weep
Strangely ! I walk even yet in sleep.
Things are not only as they seem :
Men dabble in dark pools of dream,
And shriek themselves awake in bed,
Grey with one night's enormous dread.

Even so shall I. I lean with faith-
On what my soul to itself saith.
Yet you who stand about me here
Have almost numb'd me with the fear
That, after all, this thing is real,
And that I kill'd her. Let me feel
These seeming walls and windows barr'd.
Oh, misery ! They are firm and hard !

I wail and wander like a ghost,
Houseless, about a glimmering coast,
Where one lost face makes red the night.—
O lingering dawn ! O day ! O light !

THE MASQUE OF THE NEW YEAR.

So forth issèw'd the Seasons of the Year.

SPENSER.

I.

OUT from tower and from steeple rang the
sudden New Year bells,

Like the chorusing of genii in aërial citadels ;

And, as they chimed and echoed overthwart the
gulfs of gloom,

Lo, a brilliance burst upon me, and a Masque went
through the room.

First, the young New Year came forward, like a
little dancing child,

And his hair was as a glory, and his eyes were bright
and wild,

And he shook an odorous torch, and he laugh'd, but
did not speak,
And his smile went softly rippling through the roses
of his cheek.

Round he look'd across his shoulder ;—and the
Spirit of the Spring
Enter'd slowly, moved before me, paused and linger'd
on the wing ;
And she smiled and wept together, with a dalliance
quaint and sweet,
And her tear-drops changed to flowers underneath
her gliding feet.

Then a landscape open'd outwards. Broad, brown
woodlands stretch'd away [day ;
In the luminous blue distance of a windy-clear March
And at once the branches kindled with a light of
hovering green,
And grew vital in the sunshine, as the Spirit pass'd
between.

Birds flash'd about the copses, striking sharp notes
through the air ;

Danced the lambs within the meadows ; crept the
snake from out his lair ;

Soft as shadows sprang the violets, thousands seeming
but as one ;

Flamed the crocuses beside them, like gold droppings
of the sun.

And the Goddess of the Spring—that Spirit tender
and benign—

Squeezed a vapoury cloud, which vanished into
Heaven's crystal wine ;

And she faded in the distance where the thickening
leaves were piled ;—

And the New Year had grown older, and no longer
was a child.

II.

Summer, shaking languid roses from his dew-
bedabbled hair,
Summer in a robe of green, and with his arms and
shoulders bare,
Next came forward ; and the richness of his pageants
fill'd the eye :—
Breadths of English meadows basking underneath
the happy sky ;

Long grass swaying in the playing of the almost-
wearied breeze ;
Flowers bow'd beneath a crowd of the yellow-
armour'd bees ;
Sumptuous forests fill'd with twilight, like a dreamy
old romance ;
Rivers falling, rivers calling, in their indolent ad-
vance ;

Crimson heath-bells, making regal all the solitary
places ;

Dominant light, that pierces down into the deep blue
water-spaces ; [noon ;

Sun-uprisings, and sun-settings, and intensities of
Tender darkness of the midnight, and the glory of
the moon ;

Rapid, rosy-tinted lightnings, where the rocky clouds
are riven,

Like the lifting of a veil before the inner courts of
Heaven ;

Silver stars in azure evenings, slowly climbing up
the steep ;

Corn-fields ripening to the harvest, and the wide seas
smooth with sleep.

Circled with these living splendours, Summer pass'd
from out my sight,

Like a dream that fills with beauty all the caverns
of the night ;

And the vision and the presence into empty nothing
ran ;—

And the New Year was still older, and seem'd now
a youthful man.

III.

Autumn ! Forth from glowing orchards stepp'd
he gaily, in a gown
Of warm russet, freak'd with gold, and with a visage
sunny-brown :
On his head a rural chaplet, wreath'd with heavily-
dropping grapes,
And with shadow-casting vine-leaves, like the Baccha-
nalian shapes.

Fruits and berries roll'd before him, from the Year's
exhaustless horn ;
Jets of wine went spinning upwards, and he held
a sheaf of corn ;

And he laugh'd for very joy, and he danced from too
much pleasure,

And he sang old songs of harvest, and he quaff'd a
mighty measure.

But above this wild delight an overmastering grave-
ness rose,

And the fields and trees seem'd thoughtful in their
absolute repose ;

And I saw the woods consuming in a many-colour'd
death—

Streaks of yellow flame, down-deepening through the
green that lingereth,

Sanguine flushes, like a sunset, and austere-shadow-
ing brown ;

And I heard within the silence the nuts sharply
rattling down ; [fire,

And I saw the long dark hedges all alight with scarlet
Where the berries, pulpy-ripe, had spread their bird-
feasts on the briar.

I beheld the southern vineyards, and the hop-grounds
of our land,

Sending gusts of fragrance outwards, almost to the
salt sea-strand ;

Saw the windy moors rejoicing in their tapestry of
fern,

And the stately weeds and rushes, that to dusty
dryness turn.

Autumn walk'd in glee and triumph over mountain,
wood, and plain,

And he look'd upon their richness as a king on his
domain :

All too soon he waned, and vanish'd over misty
heaths and meres ;—

And the New Year stood beside me like a man of
fifty years.

IV.

In a foggy cloud, obscurely, enter'd Winter, ashy
pale,
And his step was hard and heavy, and he wore an
icy mail :
Withering all the path before him, leapt a black wind
from the North,
And with stinging drifts of sleet he lash'd the deso-
lated earth.

Yet earth's beauty still remained ; for, when the fogs
had pass'd away,
The wide lands came glittering forward in a fresh
and strange array :
Naked trees had got snow foliage, soft, and feathery,
and bright,
And the earth look'd dressed for Heaven in its
spiritual white.

Black and cold as iron armour lay the frozen lakes
and streams ;

Round about the fenny plashes, shone the long and
pointed gleams

Of the tall reeds, ice-encrusted ; the old hollies,
jewel-spread,

Warm'd the white, marmoreal chillness with an
ardency of red.

Upon desolate morasses stood the heron like a
ghost, [noisy host ;

Underneath the gliding shadows of the wild fowls'
And the bittern clamour'd harshly from his nest
among the sedge,

Where the indistinct, dull moss had blurr'd the
ragged water's edge.

But the face of Winter soften'd, and his lips broke
into smiles,

And his heart was fill'd with radiance as from far
enchanted isles ;

For across the long horizon came a light upon the
way—

The light of Christmas fires, and the dawning of
new day.

And Winter moved not onward, like the rest, but
made a stand, [the hand ;
And took the Spirit of Christmas, as a brother, by
And together tow'rd the heavens a great cry of joy
they sent ;—

And the New Year was the Old Year, and his head
was grey and bent.

Then another New Year enter'd, like another danc-
ing child,

With his tresses as a glory, and his glances bright
and wild ;

And he flash'd his odorous torch, and he laugh'd
out in the place,

And his soul look'd forth in joy, and made a sun-
shine on his face.

Out from spire, and from turret, peal'd the sudden
New Year bells,
Like the distant songs of angels in their fields of
asphodels ;
And that lustrous child went sparkling to his aged
father's side,
And the New Year kiss'd the Old Year, and the
Old Year gently died.

STARLIGHT IN THE GARDEN.

THE Garden (by its ivied walls inclosed)
Beneath the witching of the night remains
All tranced and breathless ; and, in dreams reposed,
The white-wall'd house, with blinded window-
panes,
Glimmers from far like one vast pearl between
The clustering of its dark and shadowy green.

A night in June ; and yet 'tis scarcely night,
But rather a faint dusk—a languid day,
Sleeping in heaven—the interfluent light
Of Even and Morning, met upon one way ;
And, all about the watchful sky, a bloom
Of silver star-flowers fills the soft blue gloom.

Silence and odorous dimness, like a ghost,
Possess this ancient garden utterly :
The grass-plots smile beneath the starry host ;
The trees look conscious of the conscious sky ;
The flowers, insphered in sleep, and dew, and balm,
Seem holding at their hearts an infinite calm.

Even the old brick wall—that with the sun
Of many years has ripened like a fruit,
In streaks of soften'd yellow, red, and dun,
With broidery of gold lichens, that strike root
In arid fissures—wears a face of rest,
Like one who blesses all things, and is blest.

The empty vases on the terrace-walk,
The path-ways winding underneath the trees,
The moon-white fountains that aye stir and talk,
The ivy's dark and murmuring mysteries,
And all the pale and quiet statues, seem
Half shrouded in some bright and filmy dream.

There is a soul to-night in everything

 Within this garden, old, and green, and still :
The Spirit of the Stars, with noiseless wing,
 Glides round about it,—and his ardours fill
All things with life ; but most of all the flowers,
Reposing in their green and dewy bowers.

The sweet breath of the flowers ascends the air,
 And perfumes all the starry palace-gates,
Climbing the vaulted heavens like a prayer :
 The quickly answering star-light penetrates
Between the close lids of the flowers, and parts
Its way, and thrills against their golden hearts.

“O bright sky-people !” say the flowers, “we know
 That we must pass and vanish like a breath
Whenever the sharp winds shall bid us go ;
 And that your being hath no shade of death,
But floats upon the azure stream of years,
Lucid and smooth, where never end appears.

“ And yet—oh, pardon us the thought !—we yearn
In love towards your distant orbs ; and we
Have quiver’d at your touch, and sigh’d to burn
Our lives away in a long dream of ye.
Oh, let us die into your light—as hues
Of sunset lapse, and faint, and interfuse !

“ Out of the mystery of the formless night
We woke, and trembled into life’s strange dawn,
And felt the air, and laugh’d against the light ;
And soon our fragile souls will be withdrawn
Like sighs into the wide air’s emptiness :
Yet sometimes of new life we dream and guess.

“ Millions of blossoms like ourselves, we feel,
Have flush’d before austere Eternity,
And twined about the year’s fast-running wheel,
And droop’d, and faded to the quiet sky.
We are as dew in noon ; yet we aspire,
Moth-like, towards your white, ethereal fire.”

And the stars answer—"There is no true death :

What seems to blight the green earth like a curse
Is but a shade that briefly fluttereth,

God-thrown upon the luminous universe,
To dusk the too-great splendour. Therefore, flowers,
Your souls shall incense all the endless hours.

"Within the light of our unsetting day

Your wither'd blooms shall waken, and expand
More fair than now when set in earthly clay,

Fast ripening to the grave in which ye stand.
The tender ghosts of hues and odours dead
Are as the ground on which our nations tread."

At this, the flowers, as if in pleasure, stirr'd,

And a new joy was born within the night :
The wind breath'd low its one primeval word,
Like some most ancient secret on its flight ;
And Heaven, and Earth, and all things, seem'd to kiss,
Love-lost in many mingling sympathies.

THE LEGEND OF THE MIRACULOUS
ROSE-TREES.

OLD travellers say, that, in an Eastern land,
And in a field, with mountains nigh at hand,
Are found two marvellous Rose-trees ; and they write
That one bears flowers red, the other white—
Red as the fire, and white as snow on wold.
These trees are preternaturally old,
Yet keep their freshness, and from day to day
Wax greener, and more odorous and gay,
As if an angel fed them with his youth :
And the near people tell, for simple truth,
An ancient tale sent down from tongue to tongue,
Of how the trees miraculously sprung ;
Which I will here, as best I may, rehearse
In added rhyme, and weav'd into a verse.

There was a maiden, in a time gone by,
Who liv'd secluded from all company ;
For the world's battle fill'd her with more dread
Than silence,—and her parents both were dead.
And so she dwelt apart, without a friend,
In a still mansion by the city's end,
That look'd upon a garden's shadowy trees.
A voice of murmuring leaves and moaning seas
Haunted for ever that removèd house,
Like an enchantment rich and marvellous !
And under clustering boughs this maiden clear
Walk'd up and down without a thought of fear,
Though by her side was human creature none.
Yet certainly she was not quite alone :
For, in the hush of that deserted place,
She often met with angels, face to face,
And felt the wind that blows from out their bowers
Breathe in her hair ; and sometimes, when the hours
Were stillest, and the westering sun was low,
The visages of ancient Gods would grow

Out of the pale, blank air, before her eyes,
Heavily calm with piled mysteries.

But who can reckon on a placid life
Because of guilelessness? The tyrant's knife
Pierces the naked breast before the arm'd.
This gentle maiden, who had never harm'd
A living creature, and whose soul was white
And uncorrupt as elemental light,
Was by the priests accused of many crimes,
And of neglecting to observe the times
Of adoration in their temples, where
They worshipp'd a fierce God with studious
prayer.

They said she was a devil with bright looks,
And that she read not in their Sacred Books,
But kept a Fiend within her house, who fill'd
The cursed place, as soon as day was kill'd,
With gleams and fiery aspects; for, at night,
The awe-struck passers-by had seen the light

In which those angels dwelt, that thither came,
Paint the dark casements with a sudden flame.

The priests aloud for instant vengeance call,
And drag the maiden to the Justice Hall.
The people throng, and gaze into her eyes,
And think they see a spirit from the skies,
With visage pale, by golden tresses hemm'd,
Come there to judge, and not to be condemn'd.
A busy murmur passes up and down :
The thronèd Judges wear an ominous frown,
And hearken to the eager priests, who cry,
“She is accursed ! To vengeance, instantly !”
Alas ! they have determined on the deed.
The sentence has gone forth : it is decreed
That in a fire she shall be burnt to death.

The people for a moment hold their breath ;
Then rush from out the Hall, and reach the place
Of execution, in an open space

Beyond the town, and barr'd the other way
By wall-like mountains, vast and dusky-grey ;
And in the midst there is an iron stake,
From which a drooping chain hangs heavy and
black.

Some one each day, upon a foul pretence,
Dies at that stake ; and there, for evidence,
A heap of pallid ashes at the foot,
Mix'd with charr'd wood and with a fearful soot,
Before the wind goes staggering to and fro.
All round this point, the people in a row
Await, with close lips and with frequent sighs,
The offering of that lurid sacrifice.

The victim comes, by savage priests shut in,
Who rage and trample with a ceaseless din,
And throw their quivering arms about the air,
And dance like drunken men, with heads all bare.
And now the brands around the stake are laid,
With straw between. The unoffending maid

Beholds the pile, and sees, with tranquil eye,
The sharp and cruel Murder standing by ;
The executioners, with eyes blood-red,
Like half-spent embers glowing in the head ;
The kindled torches flashing round about ;
The glare and smoke ; the stirring of the rout ;
The steadfast mountains, cold and passionless ;
The meadows flaunting in their summer dress ;
The great, observant heavens, firm and still ;
The moveless trees ; the running of the rill ;
The quick birds, loudly flapping on the wing ;
The hideous priests, with white lips murmuring :
All this she sees, and still she does not quake.

Those bloody men have bound her to the stake ;
And yet she smiles, and not a word she says.

The heap is fired ; the straw and faggots blaze ;
The deathsmen farther from the pile have fled ;
The flames, up-springing, dash the heavens red ;

The swarthy smoke, like metal in a forge,
Grows sanguine all about that fiery surge.

A miracle ! A miracle ! For, lo !
The flames are out, the brands obscurely glow.
Another marvel yet ! No brands are there,
But only two fresh Rose-trees, budding fair ;
The one with flowers red, the other white.
The staring people stagger at the sight.
The maiden still is standing in her place,
And 'twixt the rosy buds they see her face.

For sudden joy the people shout and sing :
The priests upon the ground lie grovelling,
And cast themselves abroad, and idly rave,
And pull the earth about them like a grave ;
And in their howling presently they die.
The lovely lady murmurs thankfully ;
And by the people homeward she is led,
With flights of gleaming angels overhead.

And from the fiery faggots, half-consumed,
Like Life from Death, the crimson roses bloom'd ;
While from the brands unburnt the roses white
Came glimmering forth, and touch'd the air with
light.

A FAIRY TALE FOR ELDERLY
CHILDREN.

JOHN WILDE of Rodenkirchen
Was standing on a hill
Of the far-off Isle of Rügen
On a morning bright and still.

And, as he look'd about him,
He was 'ware of a little shoe,
Of glass most strangely fashion'd,
That glitter'd like the dew.

No foot of mortal creature
Such a little thing could wear :
John saw it was a fairy's shoe,
And he took it up with care.

For he knew that the dwarfish owner,
Who lived in the cave below,
Until he regain'd his slipper
On one bare foot must go.

John kept his treasure safely,
And in the dark midnight
He went up to the hill-top
Alone, without a light.

To the ground he put his mouth,
And he gave a loud halloo :—
“ John Wilde of Rodenkirchen
Has found a little glass shoe.”

Straightway he heard a murmur
Far down within the hill,
Like the swarming of a flight of bees
And the clacking of a mill.

Straightway he heard a pattering
Of little feet hard by :
But John was shrewd and cautious,
And homeward he did hie.

Next morning came the fairy,
Like a merchant rich and gay :—
“Have you got a little glass slipper
You could sell to me to-day?”

Quoth John, “I have a slipper
Of glass, so fine and small,
It is only one of the dwarf-folk
Who could put it on at all.”

Said the merchant, “I will give you
A thousand dollars new,
From the mint all freshly shining,
For this wonderful glass shoe.”

But John was avaricious—

A grasping hand had he :

He laugh'd out in the merchant's face

Full loud and scornfully ;

And vow'd, by all things holy,

No less sum would he take

Than a ducat for every furrow

That ever his plough should make.

The merchant writhed and twisted,

But saw that he must yield :

So he swore that in every furrow

John made within his field—

Yea, of what length soever

His life should chance to be—

A heavy golden ducat

He should not fail to see.

John knew right well that fairies
 To their oaths are always true :
 So away the elvish merchant
 Has taken the little glass shoe.

And away John Wilde has hurried
 Into his field to plough :
 Thought he, "Without trouble of sowing,
 I shall soon have crops enow."

Anon he drove a furrow,
 A furrow broad and deep ;
 And at once a golden ducat
 Into his hands did leap.

He jumps about and dances,
 To make sure 'tis not a dream ;
 Then, shouting like a madman,
 Again drives on his team.

And now 'twould seem a devil
Has enter'd into John.
From furrow unto furrow
He goads his horses on.

From furrow unto furrow
He urges them amain ;
And still the golden ducats
Spring up like golden grain.

Faster, and ever faster,
He tears across the land ;
And fast the yellow ducats
Come glittering to his hand.

The sun rides up the heavens,
The noon is fierce and dry ;
Yet still John drives his horses
Beneath the bright, bare sky.

The sun rides down the heavens,
And, hastening to his bed,
Shuts out the eastern moonlight
With clouds of orange-red.

Yet, till the valley darkness
Has up the steep hills clomb,
John does not stop his ploughing,
Nor turn his face tow'rds home.

The thirst for gold has seized him ;
Each day is now the same ;
His blood is all on fire,
His heart is like a flame.

For ever, ever ploughing !
Ever running to and fro,
Driving random furrows,
With never a seed to sow !

Still ploughing, ever ploughing,
Through all seasons of the year !
In the seed-time, in the harvest,
In the winter bleak and bare.

He scarcely thinks of resting :
In the early mornings cold,
While the night yet fills the valleys,
And the mists are on the wold,

His wife beholds him rising
Out of his weary bed,
With eyes like staring marsh-lights
In the hollows of his head.

When the night is at its noon,
And the stars have mounted high,
He reels home with his horses,
Like one who straight must die.

Poor wretch ! his work 's not ended :—

He has a feeble light,

And over his chests he hovers

In the shadow of the night :

Over his chests he hovers,

To count his lovely gold ;

Counting, counting, counting,

Till the sum is fully told.

He crawls to bed, and slumbers,

Yet still at work doth seem :

Still ploughing, ever ploughing,

Through perplexities of dream !

John Wilde grows thin and haggard ;

He mumbles with his mouth ;

His eyes are fix'd and arid,

Like one consumed with drouth.

It is the dead of winter :

His hands with cold are sear'd ;
The sweat is on his forehead,
But the frost is in his beard.

Still ploughing, ever ploughing !
Though the sleety mists environ,
And the plough goes through the furrows
Like iron into iron.

Still ploughing, ever ploughing !—
But how's this ? The earth spins round !
There is darkness all about him !
He has fallen upon the ground !

The horses come home early ;
But their master—where is he ?
Some neighbours go to seek him
Where they know that he must be :

And there they find him lying,
All stiff and stony-eyed,
Stretch'd full length in a furrow,
And a ducat by his side.

O wretched fool ! what matter
How fast the plough he drave ?—
In ploughing up his ducats
He was digging his own grave.

John Wilde of Rodenkirchen
Has been dead this many a year ;
But folks not much unlike him
Still now and then appear.

THE FIRST DEATH.*

SCENE.—*A solitary place in the midst of Trees. KABEEL sitting moodily upon a Stone. EBLIS (a shapeless gloom) standing in front of him. The setting sun close upon the horizon.*

Kabeel. What art thou, that thus standest in my
 path,
 Thou shapeless and dilating Mystery?
 I've felt thee in my heart a weary while,
 And in still places I have talk'd with thee,

* An Arabian tradition, connected with the Mahometan version of the story of Cain and Abel, forms the substance of this dramatic scene. According to the Arabian narrative, Eblis (the Evil Principle) taught Kabeel (Cain) the way to slay his brother by suggesting to him the dashing in of his skull with a stone. In the present instance, Eblis is represented as nothing more than an outward reflection of the inner evil in Kabeel's nature; and therefore the device of the stone becomes a subtlety of his own disturbed brain.

Muttering strange words ; but, till this moment,
never

Hast thou upon these eye-balls laid the weight
Of thy most awful presence. Speak to me !
I fear thy silence, and that eyeless face
With which thou starest at me ! Art thou dumb ?
I feel thee rising out of mine own soul,
As a black smoke goes upward from a fire,
And hangs in the lagging wind. I know, O Shade,
That thou hast lived within me like my blood ;
Yet wherefore dost thou load the dying day
With such enormous darkness ? wherefore rise
Like a new Chaos, blacker than the old,
Making a void of the sweet face of things ?

Eblis. I am the Evil Spirit in thy heart.
I am a part of thee ; and well thou say'st
That thou hast parley'd with me in dim nooks.
I am a part of thee ; yet not alone
Of thee, but of the orbèd universe,—
A drop of the unconquer'd primal Night

Wherefrom this world arose. In everything
Below the swift heavens and the home of God,
A wonder and a misery to myself,
I blend most strangely with my opposite :
Darkness and light, discord and harmony,
Mix'd in unceasing strife !

Kabeel. Thy words fall down
Into the joyless caverns of my soul,
Like stones into abysses of the hills,
Waking stupendous murmurs. O thou Gloom !
My spirit lies before thee in a trance,
And must to thee yield up her inmost self.
Alas ! I feel thou art a part of me,
And yet I melt beneath thee like a dew !
Why dost thou grow upon me day by day,
Companioning my dreadful solitude ?

Eblis. Kabeel, thou hast a brother.

Kabeel. Lo ! thy shade
Grows heavier at that word. Thou speakest false.
I have a clinging curse, they call my brother :

I have a heavy pain, they call my brother :

I have a desolation in my heart,

They call my brother ! And my soul is sad.

Eblis. Thy brother's highly favour'd, lov'd, and
prais'd :

The heavens smile on him, and dull things of earth

Rejoice to be the servants of his will.

The vapour of his spiced sacrifice,

Made yesterday upon the skyey hills,

Took wings for the eternal land above,

While thine was beaten back into thy face,

And dash'd upon the dust, and made as naught.

And yet *his* offering had Murder in't,

And innocent blood of meek and trusting lambs

Accuse him to the vast, eternal sky.

Kabeel. Thou speakest duskily. What thing is this
Which thou call'st Murder ? for I know it not.

Eblis. Thou wilt soon know it, more than words
can tell :

Thy hand is heavy with a weight of doom.

—Kabeel, bethink thee of thy many wrongs.

Thy father and thy mother turn from thee :

She whom thou lovest, and would'st call thy wife,

Swoons when she hears thy step.

Kabeel.

No more ! no more !

There is a dark tide rising in my brain,

And I am borne upon it. The glad heavens

Are gone—the sweet earth vanish'd ; and I stand

Within a vast and melancholy blank,

Listening to thy far-sounding words, which burst

Upward, like bubbles from the deep black wells.

Eblis. Thou wouldst be happier if thou hadst no
brother.

Kabeel. What is it that thus shakes the darkness
round

As with a hand ? What groping thing is this ?

Eblis. There is a god called Death, whom thou
know'st not ;

Yet is he ever hovering in thy flesh,

And in all flesh ; and whomsoe'er he takes .

Within his stiff embrace turns faint and pale,
And lays him down upon his mother earth,
Kissing with dreary lips the foot-spurn'd dust,
And never speaketh more to friend or foe,
Nor eats, nor drinks, nor moveth any limb ;
No, though you taunt him loudly in the ear :
And so he fades away into a thing
That his own kindred hide in very shame,
And the earth takes him back unto herself.
Thus will it be, though it hath not been yet,
With all thy father's race.

Kabeel. What prayers, what vows,
What devilish sacrifices, what loud cries,
What raging dances, what fierce ecstasy,
What gashings of the limbs, what sumptuous pain,
Will draw this god, like lightning, from his heaven,
To do my bidding ?

Eblis. He needs none of these :
Thou hold'st him in thy hand—this unknown god—
With many a harmless-seeming thing, wherein

Look forth ! What seest thou ? Look !

The darkness stirs :

Like night before the morning, languishes !

I see my brother sleeping in the shade

Of mingling palm-trees. Very still he lies :

Idly his huge arm drops along his side ;

His strengthful fingers' feebly clutch the grass ;

His open mouth is speechless ; and the soul

That look'd out of his eager eyes has fled.

Is this the god thou speak'st of? Is this Death?

Eblis. Death comes upon the tempest of his
might !

The upper air is ruffled with his step !

What see'st thou now?

I see the darkness yearn

From side to side, and strangely palpitate :

And now it gathers form, and glares aloft,

A living blackness ! Now—O horrible !—
It is myself I look upon, with eyes
That peer into their own tremendous depths,
And startle at themselves !—Light, light ! O light !
Ye wingèd ministers of the One Supreme !
I am alone in darkness ; and my heart
Is traitor to itself, and mocks at me !—
Alas ! they hear me not—they know me not !
My thought stands full between me and the heavens ;
The shadow of my soul is on all things !

Eblis. The great god Death comes nearer—nearer
still !

Look up, and give him welcome !

Kabeel. Now, strange shapè,
Thou holdest in thy hand a jagged stone,
And smil'st on it ! And now, with upward whirl
Of that avenging arm—Ha, ha ! the bolt
Has fallen, and my heart cries out ! My breath
Seems snatch'd from me ! My ears are loud with
noise !

My sight dazzles ! Bear me up ! The rooted earth
Rolls hither and thither, and I faint—I sink !
There is a crimson something in my eyes,
Which dances like the motes before the sun !
I have a sense of a distorted face,
And of a silence that shall live for aye,
And of a satisfaction and deep ease
To the very bones, like that which comes to us
At quenching of a great and tyrannous thirst !
I could even weep ; but not for grief—not grief !

Eblis. The mighty Death shall set his seal on the
world !

Rejoice, Kabeel ! The great god Death shall come !

[He vanishes like a slow cloud. KABEEL, who has fallen to the earth, starts up with a great cry. A red sunset is looking through the trees.]

Kabeel. Spread yourselves out, ye hills ! Leap up,
ye heavens !

Sink, thou firm earth, below me ! for my joy
Cannot contain itself within your bounds !

My heart is giant-like, and knocks against
The framework of the world ! Arise, thou dust,
And triumph over that which treads on thee !
Shout to the scornful and down-looking stars,
Ye stones, and ye contemnèd, lowly things !
I will avenge the wrongs of such as ye.
Nature, to discord and confusion haste !
Roar to the many-faced and threatful sea,
Ye cloud-compelling and great-voicèd winds !
Answer, ye billows, from the vast abyss
In thunderous laughter !—I will do this deed.

[Observes the sunset.]

Thou fierce, red sunset, staining all the west,
And splashing the tree-tops with wicked light !
Thou shalt to me be as an influence,
Only I will surpass thee. I will fling
A light far down the weltering stream of years,
Crimson as thine, but not so briefly gone,
Which men shall quake to see. I will glare out
From the recesses of the cavernous Past,

A bloody star, more dreadful than those shades
By night beneath the iron cedar woods
When the moon drops below the hills, and all
The world lies blinded ! And, for ever and ever,
The spurn'd and prostrate man shall turn to me,
As to some glorious Terror in the skies,
And shall cry out, " I thank thee, O Kabeel !
I thank thee for the deed which thou hast done,
And for the deed which I will do, thus taught
By thy supreme example !"—O thou Night,
Now darkening down from the utmost peak of
Heaven,
And closing with black lids upon the west !
I charge thee, stare out with thy million eyes,
To see the advent of this mystery, Death !
For Death is coming, to wed the virgin world !
This hand holds Death ! There shall be Death ere
morn !

GHOST-MUSIC.

Near Rupes Nova, in Finland, there is a lake, in which, before the Governor of the Castle dies, a spectrum, in the habit of Arion with his harp, appears, and makes excellent music.

BURTON'S *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

BENEATH the pallid castle walls
 Of Rupes, where the rocks scowl grimly,
 And down dark crags the sunlight falls,
 A lake lies dimly.

Nothing is seen upon its shore
 But weary waters, flat and grey,
 Or boat that in the distance hoar
 Fadeth away.

Or, peering out between the sedge,
The bittern ; or the heron drinking ;
Or stork that by the water's edge
Seems always thinking.

Yet, round about, by night or noon,
A murmur of enchantment flies,
Far-sounding, like a fairy tune
When daylight dies.

The rocks all round—broad, brown, and bare,
Down-trampled by the eternal streams—
Have struggled into shapes that glare
Like sculptured dreams.

And in the trees that shade the ground
The furtive wind sits always humming ;
And in the caves is heard a sound
Of elfish drumming.

The Lake is smooth, and bare, and wide ;
The distant shore looks out like sleep ;
And sleepy water-lilies ride
At anchor deep,

And open their white vases dim,
And ruffle their dark leaves, and quake,—
Like water-nymphs that by the brim
Lie half-awake.

And ever, when that ghostly mere
The moonlight paves with shaking gold,
Upward there grows a sense of fear,
And gathering cold.

For, in the blue-black depths, a cell
Holds a swart Goblin, known far round
For weaving one portentous spell,
On which is wound

The life of him who sits in state
 Within the neighbouring castle walls,
And governs with an iron weight
 His vassal thralls.

He sways them with a lordly will,
 And holds their lives within his hand :
Death seems his slave ; yet fears he still
 When Death shall stand

Before him like a master, sent
 To call him through the dark away :
He knows that when his life is spent
 The Elf will play.

He knows that up from watery gloom
 The awful Elf will rise, and take
The Harp that lies like sleeping doom
 Beside the Lake ;

That lies in broken rock and weed,
Untouch'd from year to year, except
When the loos'd winds with shuddering speed
The strings have swept.

The dreadful Fairy heaves the Harp
From out the weed, from out the stone ;
He sits upon a headland sharp,
And wakes its tone.

At first it seems a little sound,
Fine, and faint, and far away,
From behind the hills that bound
That rocky bay.

At first it has not strength to shake
The lightest leaf upon the tree,
Nor rouse the ripple on the Lake,
Nor start the bee

From out the swinging fox-glove bells,
Nor sway the spider on his thread ;
But soon the music pants and swells,
Till, overhead,

Comes the sound of many voices,
Comes the rushing of many wings ;
And with those huge, harmonious noises
The dull air rings.

And the stagnant trees are shaken
As with wind, in Autumn moaning,
And the ripples begin to waken,
And the bees cease droning

In the fox-gloves, and the spider
Shrinks in fear to a yellow ball.
Deeper spread the tones, and wider,
Round the Hall.

The near rocks thrill with an iron tongue,
The distant rocks give faint replies :
The doom'd man hears his death-knell rung,
And, swooning, dies.

Then sinks the Goblin down below ;
The Harp lies idly by the Lake ;
The wreathèd ripples cease to flow,
The leaves to shake ;

The bees again in the fox-gloves blare,
The crags hum fainter, thrill on thrill,
The spider trails out in the air,—
And all is still.

THE BOY MAHOMET.

THE infant Mahomet, the three years' child,
 Would often wander, when the day was young,
 Within a quiet valley, where the grass
 Kept its Spring greenness always fresh and bright
 Under the smooth, broad shadow of the rocks,
 From out the convolutions of whose cells
 Infinite rivulets came bubbling forth
 With a continual music, and pass'd on
 (Weaving a silver network as they went)
 Beneath old trees, through tangled gleams of gold,
 Into the caverns on the farther side.

The grave and thoughtful sweetness of the place
 Pleas'd that young child ; for, in his lightest sports,
 Those who observ'd him closely could perceive
 A hint of something awful and afar,—

A bright, disturbing Presence,—a veil'd lamp
Burning down long, rich avenues of dark,
Like that prodigious meaning which looks through
The empty eyes of statues. Oftentimes
When his loud playmates sought him, he would be
Lying beneath some tree's far-reaching dusk,
Deep in this glen ; and, on a certain day,
Two angels found him there.

Upon a crag

These angels had descended recently,
And down the slope side of the mountain came
Towards the boy, who, undisturb'd by fear,
Receiv'd them as two bright dreams that had lost
Their way from out the Paradise of sleep :
And soon they floated over him, and lull'd
His spirit with the fanning of their wings,
Until he slumber'd. Then, with painless touch,
One of those angels open'd the child's breast,
And took the heart out, and between his hands

Wrung forth all drops of bitterness and sin,
All black clouds lurking in that heaven of red,
And fill'd it with the light of his own looks,
With living fire and radiance, till it glow'd
A deep interior crimson : all which time,
The second of the angels sang this song :—

“ The cloud is slumbering in the sky,
The bird is sleeping on the tree,
And the winds go pausing by
With a murmur like the sea ;
And the sea itself is calm,
And the beast is in its lair :
Sleep thou, too, beneath the balm
Dropping from the heavens bare !

“ Day is young within the East,
And the night, not wholly gone,
Lingers still about the West,
Where the white stars mock the dawn.

Drowsy sounds are in the place,
And a constant whispering :
Sleep, fair child, and dream a space !
I am watching while I sing !

“ As the sun, with lips eternal,
Drinks the darkness when he rises,
• And with sudden light supernal
All the mountain-peaks surprises ;
As the moon-dawn cleanses heaven
From the sad stains of the night ;
So we wring the dusky leaven
From thy heart, and leave it bright.

“ Unto Asia, sunk in shame,
Be a radiance seen afar !
Be an orb of fire and flame !
Be a glory ! Be a star !
Be a crescent moon, whose sphere
Keeps dilating ! Be a sun ! —

Now thy heart is close and near
In thy breast ; and all is done."

And, while the song yet murmur'd in the air,
Those angels rose on their sustaining wings,
And, like two doves moving in circles, went
Higher and higher through the golden blue
Of morning, till they vanish'd like white clouds
That die into the windy emptiness.

Then up rose Mahomet as from a dream,
And felt those angels in his heart, and knew
They were no dream ; and on his visage lay
That brightness which proclaim'd him through the
land
A king of men—the Prophet of Allàh.

A L A M E N T.

• (SET TO MUSIC BY CHARLES LUCAS, ESQ.)

THE clouds from out the sky are driven ;
The moon is large, and round, and white ;
The glow-worms like the stars of heaven,
Sleep in the spheres of their own light,
To-night.

The fireflies in the air are dancing ;
With golden light they burn and thrill ;
And all, beside their restless glancing,
Between the river and the hill,
Is still.

The night-bird in the trees is singing ;

She fills the wide night with her soul :

The river, on its journey springing,

More gently tow'rds its distant goal

Doth roll.

The heavens are liquid, soft, and starry ;

The earth is rock'd and lull'd in sleep ; ●

The dreams, of darkness born, still tarry ;—

Yet I my restless vigil keep,

And weep !

GRAVE - VOICES.

THE mists were beginning to creep and glide
 (The yellow mists of dark November)

As I walk'd in a churchyard old and wide,
 Under the daylight's dying ember,
 And look'd at the graves on every side,
 And thought of the end of life's December.

The gravestones once had stood upright,
 But now they leant so close together,
 They seem'd, to Fancy's shaping sight,
 Like whispering witches, or like a tether
 Of pauper women in dirty white,
 Cowering under the aguish weather.

The hollow cells of the dead below
 Had sapp'd the gravestones' frail foundations ;
The cold, thin grave-worm, wriggling slow,
 Had push'd them somewhat from their stations ;
And the moss had had plenty of time to grow
 Over their rhyming declarations.

Whether it was some goblin sleight,
 Or whether a trick of the mind's own playing,
Or whether a freak of the fading light,
 Is past my power of bewraying ;
But I thought each tomb became a sprite,
 And I heard the words that they were saying.

“ We are liars all,” they squeak'd and cried,
 “ We are liars all,” they mouth'd and mumbled ;
“ We serve the bones below, whose pride
 Is fed by death, instead of humbled.”
At the sound of those words, on every side,
 How the relics of the dead men rumbled !

The goblins then, with mop and mowe,
With spasmy jerk and elfish grinning,
Began to tell what each did know
Of the dead men's unrecorded sinning ;
And the first of one long shadowy row
I heard in the twilight thus beginning :—

“ My stony face, in rain and sun,
Declares that he who rots below it
His virtuous deeds had never done,
Till death removed him ; but (*I know it*)
He counted the virtues, every one,
But as the dreamings of a poet.”

“ And I,” cried a goblin lean and small,
“ Say of the knave who lieth under,
That he fed the wretched in his hall ;
But he fed them only with his plunder :
And if he endow'd a hospital
With theft, where lies the worth, or wonder ? ”

A third : " I speak in oily phrase
Of my occupant's amazing piety,
And record his life of prayer and praise
To the very limits of satiety ;
But his heart sought dull, material ways,
And straggled to church for mere variety."

A fourth : " I sing in sounding verse
Of a genius underneath me sleeping :
I laud his writings, full, yet terse ;
But my words are with the rest in keeping.
His wits lay under a sluggish curse,
And their crops were never worth the reaping."

And thus, in the gathering shades of night,
And under the vapours cold and crawling,
Those gibing spirits, to left and right,
Our human vanity kept galling,
And wagg'd their tongues in pride's despite,
In a way half-humorous, half-appalling.

For as many stones as there I found,
So many impish voices clatter'd :
Yea, the voices rose from underground,
From weedy hillocks old and batter'd ;
And not one of the dead within that bound
But was with foul detraction spatter'd.

I left the place with heavy heart ;
I sought the town in the lighted distance ;
I needed the forms of life and art
To meet those ghosts with strong resistance.
A wind from out of the north did start,
And drove my gloom and the sullen mist thence.

Our human hearts (I said) are wrought
Of good and ill in a subtle tangle :
They err who count the good as naught,
And with redeeming angels wrangle :
We still hear God's harmonious thought,
However the earthly discords jangle.

I doubt not many a spotted life
Slept in that graveyard's black embracement ;
But some kept up a golden strife
With the dark,—a dusky-bright enlacement.
Their souls, with quenchless ardour rife,
Lifted themselves from their own abasement.

•

We need forgiveness all, and ruth,—
Ourselves who live, and our buried sires ;
But even the darkest heart, in sooth,
Is touch'd with the far celestial fires.
Therefore those goblins spoke the truth
Only in saying, " We are liars."

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

TIME : *Midnight on December 31st. The Bells are ringing in the New Year, and a gusty wind is blowing, alternately carrying away the sound of the Bells, and allowing it to be heard.*

THE WIND.

BENEATH the quiet Heaven's starry sheening
 My long and snaky windings are uncurl'd,
 And, with a weight of melancholy meaning,
 I circle round the melancholy world.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

We thrill and carol with a happy brightness
 As, smitten into life, we roll and ring ;
 And, leaping from our homes with giddy lightness,
 Down the precipice of air we dance and spring.

THE WIND.

O ever-living stars ! how old and lonely
Are ye and I ! How sad, and how apart !
The feeble years die round us, and our only
Companion is the sorrow in the heart.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

Into sudden, wild existence roaring, flashing,
Into quickly-wrought extinction murmuring round ;
Through the whirling and the winding and the
crashing,
We are happy in the life which we have found.

THE WIND.

I mutter'd in the dark, as now I mutter,
When Chaos was all wild, and God was far
Withdrawn within His might and mystery utter,
Ere yet He had permitted sun or star.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

What matter that we die so soon? Unending
Are the elements from out of which we flow ;
And the secret of our smooth, harmonious blending
Is a mystery which the wisest shall not know.

THE WIND.

I wail and sigh over the sure declension
Of all things born beneath the covering spheres,
And find no pleasure in the brief ascension
Of any of the faint, decaying years.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

Yet Nature, with her sweet, beneficent cunning,
Gives to every living creature joyful breath ;
And Life, within its warm and cheerful sunning,
Feels no shadow of the fast-approaching Death.

THE WIND.

I know the vanity and the treacherous seeming
Of every shape of joy : I feel the grey
Of twilight in the sun's intensest beaming,
A darkness in the golden heart of day.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

O the choruses of laughter, upward rushing
From the towns and scatter'd hamlets, fleck'd with
light !
O the glad, rejoicing natures, freely gushing
Round a million happy hearth-stones, warm and
bright !

THE WIND.

A little while, and all the mirth is banish'd—
A little, little while, and all is still !
The feasters into outer space have vanish'd,
Like clouds that have departed o'er the hill.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

But the clouds, before thine impulse onward
springing,
In some other sky new shapings will receive ;
And man's soul, across its mortal boundaries winging,
Hails Eternity's all-festal New Year's Eve !

THE WIND.

I am too old to listen to young teaching,
Although 'tis nearer to the source of truth :
In vain the bitter ocean of my preaching
Thou sprinklest with the honey-dew of youth.

THE VOICES OF THE BELLS.

Then thus we drown thy melancholy murmur
With the torrent and the tumbling of our sound !
Lo ! the footsteps of the Year are growing firmer
As we fill the airy vastness round and round.

With an eager, fierce impatience, out we stammer ;

With a rush of rapid talking, down we sweep ;

With augmenting volubility and clamour,

Thus we trample, and we eddy, and we leap !

We are creatures of a momentary being ;

We can scarcely bear the sting of our delight ;

From our nests of stone and metal we are fleeing,

In a dance of mazy motion through the night.

We jostle one another, and we wrangle ;

But the harmony which is to us as Love

Breathes a reconciling sweetness through the jangle,

And we faint towards the singing spheres above :

Faint and falter with an infinite receding,

Lapse and linger with an exquisite regret ;

Till from out the dimmest distance we seem pleading,

And the eyes of frail humanity grow wet.

But the New Year, with its yet unacted history,

Claims the homage of our last departing chime ;

Then we hush ourselves in awe before the mystery

Of the youngest and the freshest birth of Time.

THE TEST OF TIME.

I.

O N C E, in the twilight realm of thought
Wandering and musing, I was brought
Before an ancient portal, wrought

Of wood and stone, but now decay'd ;
And underneath an ivy shade
I enter'd where the cobwebs sway'd.

It was an old, half-ruin'd place,
Bearing in every part some trace
Of war, as did that Temple in Thrace

Built on a perilous descent,
Under a forest rude and rent,
To Mars, the God Armipotent.

A steely light was in the hall :
The portraits hanging by the wall
Were arm'd, and mail'd, and vizor'd—all.

And round about stood empty cases
Of armour, with those helmet spaces
Which are as ghosts of vanish'd faces.

Each held a lance with nerveless grip,
Inclining sideways tow'rds the hip :
A rust of blood was at the tip.

And many clarions lay around,
Which, o'er the reeling battle-ground
Speaking in sudden starts of sound,

Once lit the blood of men like flame,
Or like the audible tongues of Fame :
But now the pale dust hid their shame.

And batter'd swords and falchions hung
Down from the walls, where, lightly slung,
The indolent spiders slept and swung.

Fix'd high amid the pendant woof
And giant net-work of the roof,
The rotting banners droop'd aloof ;

And somewhere, unperceiv'd as doom,
The death-watch, bringing thoughts of gloom,
Jerk'd his grim love-song through the room.

Dankness, and ashiness, and decay,
Were on that place. The hall was grey
With ghost-light of an elder day,

And touch'd as with a sense of Death,
Or with the vapour of a breath
That in the wide air vanisheth.

—O House that thought thyself so strong,
Forgetful that the years are long,
And greater than all forms of wrong !

O House whose tenants all were gone,
Whose strength was utterly withdrawn
And lost, like darkness in the dawn !

O House whose living soul had past !
I saw thy idol, War, down cast
By Time, the great Iconoclast.

II.

Much moved by those wild pageants there,
I wander'd forth into the air,
And reach'd a garden bright and fair—

Bright and fair, though overlaid
With languid weeds, which crept and stray'd
Across the pathways like a shade.

It was an evening at the close
Of maiden April, when she grows
Flush'd with the breath of May, and goes

Like an enchantress through the night,
Preparing for men's waking sight
New splendour, and mystery, and delight :

That magic season which calls forth
From the brown boughs and from the earth,
Hourly, some glad and sudden birth—

Glorious and swift vitalities !
I look'd across the garden trees,
And felt the innermost mysteries

Of the place and of the hour—
Emanations from that Power
Which is the life of star and flower.

—Like emerald clouds, with light between
Their vapoury folds, appear'd the sheen
Of Spring's intense and balmy green.

And many flowers were blooming yet
In that old garden, deftly set
In quaint devices ; but now, wet

With dews of night, they closed their eyes,
And gave up as a sacrifice
Their odorous souls into the skies.

In far-off fields reposed the herds ;
Through the nigh river's liquid words
Came the quick talking of the birds.

And, as I watch'd these things, the Night
Sloped down in majesty and might,
Sprinkled about with drops of light,

Which made a golden ferment waken
Within the heavens, as though, o'ertaken
With great thoughts, they were stirr'd and shaken.

For the keen stars (though faltering never)
Across those gulfs which them dissever,
Like lamps in wind, kept trembling ever.

Calm Power, and Peace, and Constancy,
And all sweet things which cannot die,
Murmur'd of smooth Eternity ;

And in the sharp, electric air
The Spirit of Earth, divinely fair,
Moved in its beauty everywhere.

—O drooping House of Mars ! decay
Unheeded ; wane, and pass away !
Thy strength was only for a day.

But the round heavens, and the trees,
And flowers, and winds, and harmonies
Of light and dark,—all such as these

Are steadfast, and perpetuate
For aye the glory of their state ;—
Gentle as Love, and strong as Fate.

LIFE AND THE BIRD.

(SEE BEDE'S "ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.")

EDWIN, the Saxon King Northumbrian,
 Sitting one day and musing in his hall—
 Musing upon the marvellous soul of man—

Said to a priest: "Behold! I am the thrall
 Of my own ignorance. What is Life?" The
 priest
 Look'd up, as one who hears a sudden call

Over dim fields at twilight, when the East
 Deadens. "O King! the more we ask and search,
 Ever the more the wonder is increas'd.

The truth thereof neither in school nor church
Have I discover'd. That celestial light
Is darken'd by our earthly smoke and smirch.

Sometimes, O King, when here you sit at night,
Feasting, and laughing in the merry shine
Of the red fire, and of the torches bright,

That quiver in the purple of your wine,—
A little bird, out of the windy cold,
Out of the darkness, awful and divine,

Comes fluttering through the door, and, waxing
bold,
Flies round the walls, and on the loop'd-up shields
Flings his quaint shadow, rapid and manifold.

Whence he has come—except from lonely fields,
And empty night, and sighing wind—none knows ;
But he is with us, and the warmth yields

A keen delight in which he thrills and glows,
Dreaming of gaudy June. A little stay
He makes, and dances for great joy, and grows

Enamour'd of his home, and does embay
Himself in odorous heat, and claps his wings,
Joying to hear the eloquent minstrels play

Their hymns to Love and everlasting things.
Without, the night is dark, the night is wide,
The night is cold and loud with tempestings,—

A vast, black hollowness, where, undescried,
The shapes of earth lie buried,—a huge Naught,
As it seems, but is not, since for ever abide

Strong facts which by the morning will be
brought
Up from their graves beneath the oblivious dark,
As they first issued from their Maker's Thought.

This stranger from afar, this bird, this spark
Leaping from gloom, and shortly seen no more,
Makes here brief dwelling, as in grove or park,

Then passes forth out at the farther door,—
Out whence he came, out in the measureless
 night,
Out in the long wind, streaming to the shore.

And we shall never know whereto his flight
Conducts him ; only that he once was here,
Almost as briefly as those blooms of light

That bud within the western hemisphere,
The crimson gardens of the downward sun,
Whose Autumn in a moment breathes them sere.

So with our Life. It comes (sent forth by One),
A white and winged bird from sacred gloom
Of ante-natal mysteries, close and dun,

And issues through the gateways of the womb,
And flutters, restless, round the sweet, warm earth ;
Then, through that other gate which is the tomb,

Wanes in dusk regions, seeking for new birth :
But whence it came, or where it goes, no eye
Has noted ; and our knowledge starves with dearth.

Only we feel it goes not forth to die.
From dark to dark, from haunted dream to dream,
From world to world, this bird-like soul will fly,

For ever, down the ever-flowing stream,
Snatching from swarthy death white infancy,
Somewhere—but where?—within the eternal
scheme."

A CLOUD-PICTURE,

SEEN FROM HYDE PARK ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST
THE 23RD, 1850.

OFTEN, from quarries of the black rain-clouds,
Heaven's architect, the Wind, abruptly builds
Brief mockeries of the world on which we walk ;
Suspending them awhile, that we may gaze
And wonder,—then to formless voids reducing
A beauty that might fill the eternal years,
And flush the unborn ages with delight.
—Such have I just beheld, peopling the wide
And crystal emptiness of the evening air.

Above the level of the open park,
Westward, up rose a wood of vapoury trees,

With some, at intervals, of taller growth,
Breaking the line across the broad, blank sky,—
And others that stood out from all the rest,
With tier o'er tier of foliage, lightly pois'd
On their supporting branches, while the tuft
Of topmost leaves seem'd trembling to and fro :
So that the trees upon the ground beneath
Look'd not more actual ; and the mind flew out
Into that dim, ærial land of calm,
And found itself in forests cool and deep,
That have their roots in unsubstantial air,
And ride upon the lapsings of the wind.
Thence on towards the North the vapour swept
Upwards, like rising ground—barren and rough,
With gorges where the gloom of coming night
Fermented, while the day yet reign'd above ;
And crags that harbour'd only crag-like firs,
As in strange sympathy : then, higher still,
Mountains, with peaks and long, precipitous sides
Cover'd with clutching moss, where all things else

Would slide with horrible smoothness to the earth.
Solidly based, as on the solid ground,
Were those cloud-mountains ; on the slopes whereof,
Which led down to the glens within their shade,
The tower'd walls of warrior-castles clung,
Lonely, and bare, and sterile, and forlorn,
Batter'd, and leaning over the abyss,
Yet lifting a defiant darkness still
Into the heavens.

Such were the sights I saw

Movelessly hanging on the sky, and fix'd
For a brief space ; but soon a change came on,
As twilight slowly deepen'd into dusk.—
The edges of the trees grew indistinct ;
Each into each the sharp leaves swoon'd and died ;
The massive branches vaguely slanted down
Into grey ruin ; and the mountain-peaks
Collaps'd and roll'd together, filling up
The hollows and the valleys, and annulling

Towers, crags, and crag-like firs : so that, at length,
A shapeless mass of cloud (the chaos-heap
Of that lost world of beauty) lay outstretch'd
Along the vast horizon ; while, above,
A depth of azure darkness—flush'd even yet
With kisses of the daylight—bore the large
And golden moon of August on its breast.

D R E A M - L A N D .

I.

A PALACE of the Gods in Heaven

I see, with massy towers seven,
And walls eternal circling round ;
Walls of gold and towers of light
Guarding the enchanted ground,—
Mystically vast and bright !

I see the towers, crystal-cold !
I see the long walls, hot with gold,
That burn athwart the marvellous day
Of their self-begotten sheen,
Starlike, sphered in their own ray ;
And the hollows in between

The terrace-walks and pillars white,
Where the shades of floating domes
Kindle into purple glooms,
Dark with deepness infinite,—
Chasms of a lustrous night !

II.

A City of the Gods o'erhead !
A City walled and ramparted !
And on the ramparts, hush'd and holy,
Sentinel angels come and go,
Moving softly, moving slowly,
Moving ever, to and fro ;
And their feet, like snow on snow,
Fall for aye, and make no sound ;
Yet the smooth and spherul round
Into which their legions flow
Weaves a music more profound
Than music of the world below.

Between those lucid domes and towers
The sacred air is clear and still ;
And, in their pomp of lordly will,
I see the old celestial Powers ;—
Crown'd regalities of Heaven,
Girt with involutions seven
Of the snake with sleepless eye,
Self-begot Eternity.
I see them in the distance far,
Each one sitting on a star ;
And each star, for ever turning
Round its centre, speeds and glows,
With a heart of inward burning
And immeasurable yearning
Under the divine repose
Of the God, who sits in state,
And whose lips, half gloom'd with Fate,
Utter laws that regulate
In the harmonies of Love
The worlds that on their swift strength go,

And the steadfast heavens above,
And the shifting clouds below ;
And the solemn alternations
Of the waves of Dark and Light
Over all the planet-nations
In their pre-appointed stations,
Shared between the Day and Night ;
And the four-fold seasons, ranging
Through flame-sudden burst of Spring,
Flushèd Summer, rioting,
And brown Autumn, slowly changing
Into Winter heavy of wing ;
And the old gigantic laughter
Of the tempests ; and the calm,
Older still, that cometh after,
Like an inarticulate psalm ;
Birth, and Death, and endless Being,
And the soul's interior seeing ;
Trooping of the stately years ;
The great system's slow revealing,

And the balance of all things, wheeling
With the wheeling of the spheres.

III.

Those golden walls grow faint and grey,
Falter, and lapse in shapeless gloom :
Like mists in wind, they pass away,
And leave me in my little room,
Sitting before the glimmering fire.
My spiritual pinions tire
And, drooping earthward, I behold
Familiar objects loved of old,
Dream-like in the dreamy light ;—
Shadow'd faces, dusky-white,
And lustrous, large, black-wooded chairs,
Reddening, like an eye that glares
Within a cavern, steady and bright ;
And books in their ascending layers
Of shelves, to order'd posts assign'd,—

Strata of up-heavèd mind,
Out of which the orb of thought
Has from age to age been wrought ;
And the souls of poets wise,
Looking from their effigies
(Deep-brow'd and large-sighted all)
On the intellectual wall ;
And, those lofty shapes between,
Pictured stories, dimly seen,
Of enchanted palaces,
Oceans, shores, primeval glooms,
Weedy solitudes of trees,
Islands in the flat, far seas,
Temples, ruins, streets, and tombs.

Our sleeping visions, waking dreams,
Receive their shape and hue from what
Surrounds our life : the soul may not
Transgress its fateful boundary streams.
Therefore, the pageants which elate

The poet in his kindling mood
Are natural truths, more sublime,
By his own inward light imbued,
Like grey clouds tintured by the sun :
And thus the spirit which has run
About the haunted mountain tops,
And scaled the peaks of morning, drops
To shady sleep on quiet ground ;
As birds, that high in air are found,
Turn to earth for evening rest,
And fold their wings in narrow bound—
The still, small heaven of their nest.

THE CITY OF EARTHLY EDEN.*

S HEDDAD the Mighty, the great of limb,
 Had the kings of the whole earth under him :
 They held their thrones at his pleasure, and all
 Came and went at his beck and call.
 His heart swell'd within him, and, mad with power,
 To his vassels he said, in an evil hour :

* The story here related is an Arabian legend, which Mr. Lane has eloquently rendered in the Notes to his translation of "The Thousand and One Nights." The site of the marvellous city is supposed to be in the deserts of Aden, at the extreme south of the Arabian peninsula. Occasionally, as tradition affirms, a wanderer in the desert comes accidentally upon the gorgeous mass of palaces and pavilions, and finds them vacant. The reader will observe that the story has a similarity to that of Zobeide in "The Arabian Nights." The existence of the deserted, but magnificent, city of Petra, in the midst of a rocky wilderness, may have led to the invention of this fable.

“I have read in the ancient histories”
Of the gardens and cities of Paradise,
Whereto the spirit of man is bidden
When, passing the Gate of Death, now hidden,
It walks in the countries far away.—
Let those who please await that day :
The will of the crowd availeth not
To expedite their promis’d lot ;
But mine is stern and strong as Fate,
And I on the earth will emulate
The pomp of that celestial state ;
Till, like a planet vast and bright,
That dazzles the day and kills the night,
And waneth never nor taketh flight,
In the heavens shall hang the golden light
Of the City of Earthly Eden.

“ Depart, then, to the mines that lie
In the caves of the mountains far and nigh,

And out of the heat and the swarthy glooms
Of Nature's subterranean rooms
Bring heavy lumps of burning gold,
And bars of silver, white and cold,
And the chrysolite, glancing yellow and green,
And the emerald, arrowy, quick, and keen,
And the ruby's throbbing heart of splendour,
Where the prison'd light beats soft and tender,
And trembles, 'twixt love and sorrow and bliss,
For the outer light which it can but kiss,
But never shall join through the endless ages :
And let the lords and the greybeard sages
Search out, with diligent toil and pain,
A spot on some delightful plain,
Where rivers four from a mountain single
Their waves with a murmuring measure mingle ;
And there, to a sound of choral song,
Build the bases steady and strong,
And lift the terraces light and long
In the City of Earthly Eden."

The vassals heard, and bow'd, and went
Their several ways, and the wonderment
Was blown abroad to the uttermost bound
Of the great earth's all-containing round ;
And the tribes and nations hurried forth
From beyond the mountains of the North,
And from out of the windy Scythian waste,
And the Indian jungles interlaced,
And the valleys cradled in the stone
Of Kaf, the world's gigantic zone,*
And wide Armenia's pastoral lands,
And awful Egypt, and the sands
At the solemn heart of Africa.
Obedient to their mighty Shah,
They swarm'd like flies ; and, after these,
From the distant islands of the seas
Came more and more ; and all address'd

* The Orientals regarded Kaf (Caucasus) as a stony girdle round the earth.

Their minds towards that strange behest,
That they might see, with living eyes,
Like a slowly-kindling dawn, uprise
The glow of this new Paradise,
The City of Earthly Eden.

For twenty years, with labour stark,
They mined and dug by light and dark,
And the naked divers dived for pearls
In the Indian ocean's perilous swirls,
And the slaves collected, piece by piece,
Saffron and myrrh and ambergris.
Then they search'd the deserts far away,
And the grassy steppes ; till, on a day,
They found a plain of vast extent,
Through which four flashing rivers bent
Their interwoven course from where,
In the hot horizon's quivering air,
The soft blue mountains lay like smoke,
Or mists of morning ; and they broke

The soil, and, under the hollow sphere
Of the heavens, eternal and austere,
They mark'd the circuit of the walls,
And the flanking towers at intervals,
And cried, with a roaring Bacchanal sound,
“Behold, behold, the chosen ground
That shall, in the lapse of time, be crown'd
By the City of Earthly Eden !”

Then day by day, and year by year,
The severing deserts, sandy and sere,
Were cross'd by the long processional lines
Of the camels moving from the mines,—
Moving slowly under the sun,
Endlessly moving, one by one,
Each over his gliding shadow steering
His ship-like way, as the shadow, veering,
And dwindling now, and now dilating,
On the sun's great course kept humbly waiting.

From the tracts and countries across the sea
Came the wingèd vessels boundingly,
With jasper, of many a freakish stain,
And the spiky coral with blushing grain
(All virgin-fresh from the cloister'd caves
And the lonely dimness under the waves),
And agate, and red cornelian,
And perfumed woods from which there ran—
With a motion that linger'd reluctantly there—
Gums worthy to weep in the glamour and glare,
And to breathe their odours into the air,
Of the City of Earthly Eden.

Up in its loveliness rose the gleam
Of the palaces wrought in that city of dream ;
Up rose each lofty pavilion,
Tier by tier, till it lighten'd and shone
Far over the plain with a restless rain
Of splendour, dazzling eye and brain.

In channels of gold, through the streets below,
The wandering rivers were made to flow,
Feeding with freshness, up from their roots
(Till the sap laugh'd out into flowers and fruits),
The trees that were planted reposingly
Wherever the water glimmer'd by :
And high in the heavens, like ice and fire
Commingle, one central diamond spire
Froze in its burning across the domes,
And the towers and temples and Sybarite homes,
And the columns and ramparts and pyramids,—
Alluring and distant, like something that bids
All men turn aside from the deserts, and rest
From the fever and fume and the wearisome quest
Of life, and repose, as a bird in its nest,

In the City of Earthly Eden.

Proud and exulting, the Ruler of men
Saw his vision of glory completed ; and then

He marshall'd his warriors, host on host,
Many and bright as the waves on the coast,
And trooping like waves in a measured accord,
And the women who own'd him as husband and lord,
And the dancing maidens, dancing in time
To the rhythm of their anklets' chime,
And the slaves and the courtiers, and all who lay
In the light of his presence, like stars in the ray
Of the moon, when the moon is full-orb'd in the sky :
And he in the midst, with his sovereign eye,
That kindled superbly whenever the blast
Of the trumpets came whirling and eddying past,
Proclaim'd the new Paradise made by his will.
As he spoke, the air, hearkening, dropp'd awfully
still ;

And when he had finish'd, that princely rout,
In the freshness of early dawn, set out—
With much of hope, and something of doubt,
And a flutter of fear, that crept about—

For the City of Earthly Eden.

Into the deserts they rode. Each night
They dreamt some dream of the coming delight,
And all day long through the trampling throng
Flow'd the wave of a heart-uplifting song.
At length, o'er the solitudes, lucid and vast,
And dilating and sun-like, the city grew fast ;
When suddenly, out of the distance, came
A cry of such might that it burnt like flame
Through the hosts of the monarch, and parch'd into
sand

Every creature that heard it. But still in that land
The city remains, and for aye shall remain,
Shut round by the hush of the desert plain,
Inaccessible, lonely, unpeopled, remote,
Though out of the noon of its splendours float
Strange beams, which are seen in the dark far
away ;

And the people, beholding that effluence, say :
“ Sheddád the Mighty, thy doom was just !
Dust thou liest within the dust ;

And all around thee thy myriads sleep,
Heavily, darkly, dead, and deep,
And nothing beside the wind dare creep
Through the City of Earthly Eden."

F L O R I M E L.

I.

TH E night is quiet, this New Year's Eve,
 Lull'd in a trance of snow and rime ;
 For a sighing wind, that seems to grieve
 Before the path of the coming time,
 Is rather a silence than a sound,—
 Or, at most, the voice of the great profound
 Of darkness closing half-way round
 This orb of earth. And I who sit
 In my curtain'd study, hearkening it,
 By my study fire companionless,
 Will send my own voice sighing out
 From the haunted dark of an old distress,
 Ere yet, in the stormy swirl and shout

Of the bells that clash from every side,
We kiss the lips of the infant Year :
For my heart this night is open'd wide,
And the wind of verse is rising there.

I lift the heavy coffin-lid
From the sweet dead face of the sad dead
Past,
Where it lies all white and still amid
The dust which the stealthy years have cast
On the graves of all things. Ah, how fast,
In the kindling breath of love and pain,
The buried time grows warm again,
And arises living, and speaks to us,
As we speak to it ! Behold how thus
From death to life comes Florimel,
The light of her love and loveliness
Just shadow'd with awful distance.—Well !
If I saw her not with the inner eye,
I should feel her presence none the less

In the quick, electric, vital nerves,—
In the quivering blood,—in the heart that swerves
From its natural course,—she standing by.

Once more I behold the face of her
Whose actions all had the character
Of an inexpressible charm express'd ;
Whose movements flow'd from a centre of rest,
And whose rest was that of a swallow, rife
With the instinct of reposing life ;
Whose mirth had a sadness all the while
It sparkled and laugh'd, and whose sadness lay
In the heaven of such a crystal smile
That you long'd to travel the self-same way
To the brightness of sorrow. For round her breath'd
A grace like that of the general air,
Which softens the sharp extremes of things,
And connects by its subtle, invisible stair
The lowest and highest. She interweath'd
Her mortal obscureness with so much light

Of the world unrisen, that angel's wings
Could hardly have given her greater right
To float in the winds of the infinite.

And her coming was a swift surprise,
Making the old earth born anew
Out of prophetic dawn, as through
Those lucid windows of the eyes
The souls of us look'd forth, and kiss'd
Suddenly, deeply, darkly : then
Each of the other's being guess'd
The central thought, there lying blest
Beyond the reach of vulgar ken.
What need of words, which are but faint
• Colours in which we poorly paint
The eternal flame within, when ray
Mingles with ray, and shoots direct
Into the broad celestial day?
Yet Love, grown human, must affect
Our brittle human speech ; and I

Sought by the weak infirmity
Of words to prove the truth of what
My innermost nature doubted not :
And at those words the vision died.

She answer'd, not with scorn or pride,
But rather with sorrowful ruth and awe,
That, gazing into the distance, saw
The Yes of the heart unratified
By the stern, awaiting Future. So
'Twere better that each alone should go
Through the desolate stretch of arid sand,
Than find at once the blissful land,
Only to faint on the slopes, and bleed
In the midst of the unpluck'd roses. . Strange
That my eyes were blind, and could not read
In *hers*, that would so quickly range
From bright to dim, the cause of this
Her faltering answer ! For indeed,—
As a planet out of the vast abyss

Comes with its golden blush suffused,
And, trembling ever with love and fear,
Withdraws itself to the finer sphere
Of heaven's interior ecstasies,—
She faded, smiling, like one unused
To earth ; and as, for a little space,
The planet renews its shining grace,
And glows on the verge of the utmost dark,
She kindled at times (though I did not mark
The changes *then*) with a light of life,
Whereat I marvel I did not weep.

No hope ! Yet ever within the strife
Of the common world I vow'd to keep
The thought of her as a central calm,
Refreshing myself with the sacred balm
Of a passion doubly full and deep
From the added sorrow. This I hold,—
That a true affection grows not cold
Because the sun has left its sky,

But all the night-time warms it by
Its own immortal heat and strength,
Being to its darkness sun and moon
And star ; and knowing that at length
Desire of good, whate'er says Nay,
Fulfil itself, by some rough way
Reaching its Eden, though it swoon.

But still she faded with patient look ;
And, as in a suddenly-open'd book,
I read the peril that lay in wait
For the life of *my* life ; read thus late
The truth, and felt reliev'd almost
When I saw stand off from the English coast
The ship that bore her, all its sails
Set for the soft Italian gales,
That visit the delicate shore of Nice
From leagues of sunlit sea and peace.
—Fair blow the warm winds over the sea,
And bright may the lovely country be

Where the winter spares the myrtle-tree,—
Divine for ever ; but most of all
When she by its magic breaks the thrall
That keeps her heart from the heart of me !

II.

Month after month pursued its course,
Bringing me news which I perforce
Accepted as comfort, though I felt
The spirit of sadness lived throughout.
And thus, in a wrestle of hope and doubt,
I saw the spring in the summer melt,
And the airy flush of summer pass
Into the autumn's heavier mass.
October had touch'd the skies with grey,
And the year was sad with its hastening death ;
But the west wind breath'd a balmy breath,
And the leaves were thick on bough and spray,
As I sat at my window, and watch'd the day
Wane into the grave, still afternoon,

And heard in a kind of waking dream
The distant brook, and the air aswoon
In the branchy trees. Some warning gleam
Of the imminent fact struck through me when
A letter, not from *her* dear pen,
Came to me out of the weary South.—
O shaking hand ! O clammy mouth !
O eyes eclips'd in a sudden fear !
O heart consumed in frightful drouth !
I dare not read what's written here !
No border and no seal of black,
Yet all—all black with fatal dread !
O God, absorb me ! smite me back
To naught ! I read—I read it !—
Dead !

Ah, now I see in rainy light
Of tears her answer growing white
With new translucence ! Not for her
To feel a husband's fondness stir

Around her heart, where Death had set
His standard while its bloom was wet
With dew of the April morning. She,
Turning her face away from me,
Could bear to droop, but could not bear
To see the husband's mute despair ;
Perhaps to leave, when she should die,
The sweet and dreadful legacy
Of a small failing life,—a child
Declining, piteously mild,
To its young grave. Ah, bitter fate !
For Love's sake, Love denies its mate !
Yet clearer than noon's full garishness
Are the nights on which such dawns arise,
And sweeter the gall of such distress
Than the honey of most felicities.

III.

The sudden New Year bells burst in,
Trampling the dark with fiery din.

I start, and find myself once more
Wreck'd on the Present's craggy shore.
—The Year is dead, the Year is born :
It is the tender time, and sweet,
When, pinnacled 'twixt the night and morn,
The Year we grieve and the Year we greet
Touch for an instant over the gloom,
And the dead thoughts and the living meet.
O clamour of bells, sweep into my room !
Out of the midnight pulse and swell !
And do not simply ring the knell
Of the buried days and the buried dead,
For I sit with the spirit of Florimel !
For I sit with the soul that has not fled
Forth from this soul of mine, nor will ;
And as once we heard in the air o'erhead
The iron tongues in the steeples tell
That a Year had come, a Year had sped,
So now,—by the heart's deep miracle.

Dear love ! dear ghost ! dear memory !
Beam of the light that does not die !
Now, while we hear the eddying chime
Which marks the solemn season set,
Like the sword-sharp bridge of Mahomet,
Between the Past and the Future time,
Do we not vibrate each to each ?
Yes. Though the senses may not reach
Beyond the graveyard's barren wall,
And although we often grope and fall,
And see no opening, clear or dim,
Along the horizon's cruel rim,—
Thank God that across the shoals and sands
Of this perilous life, which is but death,
We feel at times with a catching breath
The wind that comes from the outer main—
From the sea that bathes the larger lands
Where the soul may grow and perfect itself,
Having space to beat its wings, and attain
To the sum of its being broad and high ;

Not cramp'd as now on the narrow shelf
Of its half-develop'd capacity.
—All might be more than any are ;
Our natures languish, incomplete ;
Something obtuse in this our star
Shackles the spirit's wingèd feet :
But a glory moves us from afar,
And we know that we are strong and fleet.
And I know, O Florimel, I know
That I can wait, and nowise fail,
Until from the ship that delivers me
(The ship that hoists no mortal sail)
I see the coast-line dropping low,
And hear the long wind breathe and blow
In the Year that is and is to be.

THE END. ✓

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